the epistle

Poorman's

January 1987

The Shepherds' Farewell to the Holy Family

Thou must leave Thy lowly dwelling,
The humble crib, the stable bare.
Babe, all mortal babes excelling
Content our earthly lot to share,
Loving father, loving mother,
Shelter Thee with tender care!

Blessed Jesus, we implore Thee
With humble love and holy fear,
In the land that lies before Thee,
Forget not us who linger here!
May the shepherds' lowly calling
Ever to Thy heart be dear!

Blest are ye beyond all measure,
Thou happy father, mother mild!
Guard ye well your Heavenly Treasure,
The Prince of Peace, the Holy Child!
God go with you, God protect you,
Guide you safely through the wild!

Paul England

EAST HEBRON UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
WEST HEBRON UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

February 2025

INTRODUCTION

This is a chronological collection of letters written by my father (a Presbyterian pastor) and mother from Harare, Zimbabwe in the mid-1980s. They wrote these letters as updates to the church community back in the United States they had led for 14 years (1970-1983) before leaving to go serve the Lord in Zimbabwe.

My brother and I were 12 and 10 respectively when our parents moved us to Harare in January 1984. We went unenthusiastically. That might even be true of our mother, at least when she first heard Dad suggest the idea. Being a pastor, my Dad didn't think of it as "his idea". It wasn't, "Hey Joanne, I have an *idea* we should uproot our comfortable family life and move 9,000 miles away to Southern Africa." To him, it was a "call" from God, one that had been laid on his heart by the Holy Spirit starting in the Fall of 1981. From that point on, various doors opened, and various other ones closed until we found ourselves stepping off a British Airways flight onto the tarmac at Harare International Airport in January 1984, bleary eyed and unsure what awaited us in this altogether new society.

The church community we left was the only one I had ever known. Tucked away in a rural farming community in upstate New York, near the border of Vermont, it was the first pastorate my dad had taken after graduating from seminary in 1970. In the years that followed, our family formed deep friendships with neighbors and congregation members. The parting was emotionally difficult for all involved, especially in an era when communicating across continents either (a) took weeks by letter or (b) was prohibitively expensive and unreliable by phone.

Thus, these letters were my parents' primary way to stay in touch with our former church and to try and describe our new life in Harare. They were published each month in the church newsletter, appropriately called "The Epistle". My parents intended to take turns writing this monthly Epistle from Zimbabwe. Ultimately, my mom ended up writing two out of every three – no surprise to those who knew her. These letters were a mere fraction of her output. She wrote four or five letters a day at times, especially in the early months of being in Harare, as she tried to maintain an emotional connection with so many loved ones back home.

That they took turns makes for a better telling of the story. Their personalities take shape in how they each express themselves – my mom deeply relational and adept at capturing our family life in intricate detail and my dad more humorous in tone and more interested in the larger themes of church culture and the society at large. Even though they knew they were writing for a newsletter, the tone is that of letters written to close friends. Of course, there is a focus on the Christian work being done but, distilled down, the essence of these letters are simply, "we miss you all and this is what is going on in our lives."

Epistles to a church body, however deeply felt, are not personal diaries. They don't contain the deepest, most vulnerable insights into how a person feels. That's not to say they are false, only that humans use different internal editors depending on the audience. A diary entry that no one will ever read can be completely candid. Next comes the personal letter to one other person, shaped by the assumption that only they will read it. These Epistles were written in the knowledge that <u>many</u> would read them. They should be read as such. I mention that only because my mother kept a diary in the first year we lived in Harare. While the two don't contradict each other, they highlight different themes and different struggles, some of which are wholly absent here. Life is too intricately complicated for any one narrative to be the comprehensive story.

I make one self-written cameo in these letters as an 11-year-old in early 1985. It's just a snippet but in it I prove to be my parents' son, signing off "Your Brother in Christ". This last point can't be overemphasized: our family lived within the boundaries of a Christian worldview (Reformed/Protestant) that my parents prized and shared. Each of these letters is infused with that patina from top to bottom, reflecting the reality of both our family life and my dad's work at the City Presbyterian Church in Harare.

Mom and Dad were in their late 30s/early 40s at the time, younger than I am now by a decade. In an afterward, I'll reflect on what reading these letters evokes in me now, having gone through my own journey of adulthood and landed into the nostalgic posture of middle age. Enough of my thoughts. Allow their own words to introduce you to Sturge and Joanne. These are their Epistles to the Hebronites, unchanged in both chapter and verse. Thanks be to G-d.

THOUGHTS ON LEAVING

Since leaving is not something that is easy for me to do, I probably have not been very open with my feelings about this transition in my life and in the life of my family. In these few paragraphs I would like to share with you as honestly as possible now what is going on inside me.

When Joanne and I first came to Hebron back in July of 1970 we expected to be staying here from three to five years. I move pretty slowly, and it was obvious to both of us after five years that God still had much more that He wanted to teach me and have me do here in Hebron. Yet ever since the beginning I've known in the back of my mind that the day would come when we would have to leave Hebron. I've dreaded that day. That's because basically I am the "settling in" type. I've liked it here! My family has liked it here. There has always been work for me to do here. When people have asked me in the past when I was going to move on to a "bigger" church I have responded that there was no reason to, that Hebron was where God had put me and that unless it was very clear that I should go somewhere else that this was where I should be. Then, as this call to Zimbabwe materialized, I realized that God has been doing something through my "settling in" personality. For in this clear "I want you!" type of call I could see that God had been preparing me through my longer than usual ministry here in Hebron for a specialized ministry in another part of the world. You see, I could not have gone to Zimbabwe after five years here, nor even after ten. I was not ready. But God's timing is perfect and I am convinced that as God has been preparing me, so has he been preparing the one that is to be your new pastor.

But now comes the hard part--the leaving. My memory is pretty good and it rips at my heart when the images of those special life experiences I have shared with you come into view. The births, the grievings, the new births in Christ, the crisises, the celebrations. And then the youth group kids and the Bible studies, and the laughter and the tears--and the music. About then I catch myself as being too sentimental. But God has given me a memory for more reasons than for just reciting history facts, and if my memory produces sentiment--so be it. It provides me with the opportunity to give thanks to God for what He has done for me and my family here in this place. Praise God that He provided us with two very accepting churches who have cared about me and about Joanne and who have celebrated in the birth and growth of our sons! Praise God that we have never been alone!

I guess this is one of those times during my life in Christ when the celebration of what He has done is by its nature painful. And I know that you are experiencing the same type of emotions as well. Why does God do that to us? Well, the best I can say is that it's part of the package for a Christian in this life. The love that comes into our hearts in Christ means joy but it also means pain. "And we know that we have passed from death into life because we love the brethren". This means pain for now. But it is not worthy to be compared with the glory and the joy which will be ours when we are together forever with our Lord Jesus. Through memories, through tears, God is preparing us. Rejoice! Come Lord Jesus!

Sturgis Poorman

YES, HARARE!

When the Poormans came here in the flower of youth
They were God's gift to West Hebron town
What they found was a mess, but one Jesus could bless,
And His love through the years has come down.

Chorus

"Yes, Harare!" for it's God's chosen way
For His honor and glory to say "Yes, Harare!"

Though a duo at first, that soon changed with the birth
Of that first little bundle of joy
It was Aaron we know and he surely did grow
To be one super-fabulous boy!

Chorus

Then their number two son, little blonde Garth Poorman
Did arrive and complete the family
So it's four of them now and they've surely shown how
Great a Christ-centered family can be.

Chorus

Lulu, John, Buff and Ray--all the folks they do say
That as hostess Joanne is first-rate,
But she'll never drink milk, raising up farmers' elk
And Buff's puddles she couldn't quite face.

Chorus

Sturge had sermons to preach--we were dummies to teach
And some found it was time for a nap,
But persistence pays off and some old ways we'd doff
Though there still is resistance to clap.

Chorus

Now the time is at hand to go out from this land
And to move on with what God has planned
He has trained you all here growing more every year
So in Africa strong you may stand.

"Yes Harare!" they are off on their way
To be happy in Jesus, down in warm Zimbabwe.

Wes and Linda Clark
December, 1983

POORMAN'S NEW ADDRESS

49 Montgomery Avenue
Belvedere
Harare, Zimbabwe

WORDS OF THANKFULNESS, ENCOURAGEMENT AND A PRAYER REQUEST

Whenever I go to a place where quite a few ministers are gathered I come away feeling so very thankful that God planted us in Hebron! It's not that the other ministers are complaining, it is just that their experiences are so different then our and to me it makes their lives seem so lonely.

For instance, one of the ministers mentioned having a dietary problem and I said, "How do people in your church relate to that when they have you for dinner?" They said, "Dinner? We really don't get invited by church members to dinner. I don't even think they know I don't eat certain things." For some reason, comments like that always bring tears to my eyes because we have been so blest here by true friendships within the church body and we have grown so much by time spent with people in their homes, around their table, etc.

I want to encourage all of you in reaching out to the minister and their family (and to other Christians in the church)! I could tell tale after tale of lonely ministers and their wives who don't receive Christ's love through the Body they have to then be a part of--after all, it would be odd if your pastor's wife (or husband) worshipped at another church! In the dynamics of reaching out--a letter, a phone call, tea, dinner, a quick visit, going to the movies together, etc.--communication and bonding takes place. Through that there is even one more channel for the Holy Spirit to work. Try not to rely on others to do the reaching out, you reach too--there is always someone to reach too!

After all the difficult times I know ministers have--they all kind of look at me with wide eyes when I speak of the Hebron churches--I realize prayer is needed for our adjustment in Harare. I could go expecting City Presbyterian Church to be just like West/East Hebron and maybe I'd then be bitter, etc. I could go expecting to be lonely and have to seek friends outside the church--I get sad even writing that for it has been such a joy to have friends within the church! So, I am taking each day as it comes and trying not to visualize. Please pray that the people in Harare will be a true, loving Christian family to us (as you have been!) and that they will accept our reaching into their lives and they will desire to reach into ours as well.

Thank you for your love and prayers!

Joanne Poorman

POORMAN'S NEW ADDRESS:

49 Montgomery Avenue
Belvedere
Harare, Zimbabwe

To our dear friends in Hebron! January 14, 1984

We are in Harare! and your prayers for rain are being answered even as I write to you. They are having a thunderstorm. Already when we arrived this morning things were much greener than in Sturge's slides that he showed you. However, water is being rationed. We have to monitor our personal usage and keep it to a designated figure.

As I write our whole family is fighting jet lag. Aaron and Garth have both fallen asleep. Sturge and I are trying to have a regular schedule. It was very difficult to sleep on the plane! Part was lack of space, the other part was mind activity and emotions.

I really don't see how Sturge made the trip alone that first time. Even with the family inches from me I had two extremely painful times of loneliness. One at Kennedy Airport--the surroundings were so unfamiliar, the people all so different--I just wanted to go home, to have things normal and yet our home in Hebron was empty, our car sold to Nance and Den...Yet God gave me His strength--I literally had none.

Leaving our family was hard--mainly because of how far we will be from them. But again I have to trust that God will bring good to us through this time of separation.

My other very lonely time was on the airplane as we neared Harare. I just wanted to scream, "Take me home!" but God brought me peace. What do people do without God--how can they exist???

We were royally welcomed at the airport by Herbert and Alice and six church members. God answered the prayers for our luggage to arrive safely and they barely questioned us at customs.

Herbert told us what a real miracle our work permit was! Usually it takes months and when Herbert went Monday a week ago it had not even begun the desk-to-desk process. When he went the following Monday to see the Minister of Immigration God was right there. The man was excited Sturge had gone to Princeton Theological Seminary--he too had done work at Princeton--and he personally put it through even though there were stacks of others still waiting the long process. It shows God wants us here!

The church people--knowing the tedious government procedures--had really not held much hope for the work permit at this time. So the previous tennants were still in the house up till this past Monday. So, there has been much hustle about painting the house, preparing the gardens, etc. As of today it is not ready so we are staying in the Bronte Hotel. That has been a little hard on the boys as they are desiring a schedule that will help life seem normal. We did go to the house today and work is in progress.

We have an apartment at our hotel. I've already been to the ironing room and I need to get some detergent to wash our laundry. I've decided I should do our laundry daily otherwise I might get overwhelmed.

We run into little snags that at this point with our emotions being so pulled seem huge--like no shower and wanting to wash our hair, no washcloths, our adaptor plug being the new style and the outlets here (and probably at our home) being old style. Plus I panic every time the boys want to change outfits as I know I have to wash each item. Plus stores here close at 11 on Saturdays making us less able to take care of ourselves. But...all these things are minor.

Harare is pretty--I've traveled very little but it is very much like Jamaica and the part of Florida we were in. The flowering trees and plants are beautiful. The personal lawns are manicured but the roadside is quite "wild" and grown up. You don't feel you are in a suburb.

January 14, 1984

Herbert and Alice came to visit us--what a welcome sight they were! I can tell already how busy Herbert is. Alot of it revolves around things the government asks him to do. Alice has been worried about Herbert and she is so thankful we are here. Sturge will sit with us in church tomorrow and then go forward to read the scripture--then next week Sturge will preach.

Aaron's school will not be starting for two more weeks--I am not quite sure why. It is only his form (8th grade) which will be delayed. Garth begins Tuesday (1/17)--I can tell he is anxious.

I want to say what a blessing your letters and phone calls were while we were in Ardmore. Literally the phone rang and rang Wednesday and Thursday before we left--it is truly humbling to feel so much love. Old friends called from California, Wisconsin, Connecticut, etc. Everyone said they had been praying and would pray and let me tell you it was God working through all the prayers that got me on the plane--humanly I wanted to run away!

Sturge is about to take his first solo run in our car. We had all planned to go but I don't want to wake the boys.

We have the church in our prayers and also each of you as we get word of what is happening in your lives. Let it be known that your prayers have been a real blessing! Please continue to pray especially that as a family we can love and affirm each other through all the adjustments and cultural differences. We continue to thank God for all our growth in Hebron which has enabled us to hear His call and encouraged us to follow Him.

Lots of love!
Joanne

a while before we can really carry on a conversation. We have become good friends with John Goya (our helper) and his family -- wife Monica, and twin children Paul and Susan (15). They are a fine Christian family and have been the vehicles through which God has been bringing about our adjustment (read John 14:16,26 in the Good News Bible). The example that John has shown us as our Helper has been the model that I have seen of how Christ would have his people serve. I am constantly reminded that Jesus said that he came to serve and not to be sernved. That is the challenge to Christians - both black and white here.

Aaron and Garth are settled in their schools -- though they both prefer Salem. The teachers beat the kids with sticks here if they get out of line. Fortuneately Aaron and Garth have stayed in line! They have both found acceptance through sports. Aaron through basketball (he's the only white on the team -- all the whites play cricket) and Garth through sprints and long jump.

Don't feel too sorry for us here, every day is in the 80's! That makes up for having to flush the toilet with the bath water! Seriously though, pleases do pray for rain. Many will starve unless it comes more consistently. We love you -- and we do pray for you too!

In Christ's Love,

Sturge

The following paragraphs are excerps from a letter Joanne sent to several people in the area. Many of you may have read the entire letter already but for those of you who haven't, read and enjoy. The letter was dated Jan. 23 and arrived here about two weeks ago.

Dear ones,

It is hard to know how to explain Zimbabwe (or Harare). To me it is a mixture of manicured and wild/of beauty and sadness and y yet I feel there is hope -- especially for all those here who know Christ is in charge.

Zimbabwe has had a declared drought the past two years and unfortunately are about to declare this a drought year too. Some dams are completely empty and many, many people have left the farm-lands and come to the city but work is over-saturated here -- hence the rise in theiving. Please pray for rain -- for here and other parts of Africa. It makes us realize what a blessing water is.

Water is being rationed and people who over use are fined quite severely. Gardens cannot be watered. We have been sharing bathwate you can imagine my faeling about that but...also bath water is then taken by buckets to the garden.

Garth has started school. He goes to Selbourne Rutledge, a k-7th school. He is in the 6th grade. It is a relatively small school -- two classrooms per grade level. All children wear uni-forms for school and sport. Khaki shorts and shirts, grey knee stockings, brown leather shoes, tie and floppy blue hat. Garth said he could "do without the hat".

EXCERPS, con't.

The school day is 7:30 AM - 12:45 PM. Then required sports two afternoons a week. Garth is off to that right now. (Athletics - running, high jump, long jump. He could take swimming, cricket, tennis, judo but at this point he is saying no to those.

We are surprised and thankful for the strong Christian emphasis at the school -- each day is opened with hymns and prayers. There is a scripture course. In music all the songs have a Christian message.

Form I (the beginning of high school here) had to be delayed. There were more students then could be coped with. However, Aaron has gotten known by some of the upper classmen because he has been going to Prince Edward each day to play basketball. Here in Zim it is unusual for a European (white) to play basketball. They play cricket so ...it won't be hard to spot Aaron; he will be the only white playing. He seems quite content.

I went Saturday with Alice to Chitunwiza -- the African Church. I would so love to be able to speak to the women in their own language -- Shona. Sturge and I start a language course Jan. 30 and we'll see where that gets us.

On Saturday we went to be with the women who have just officially formed a Women's Association. Of course, as Presbyterians, that now means things have to be done "decently and in order". Minutes must be kept, records of money received and spent, etc. There are some women in their 20's and 30's that can read and write English. However, in African culture it is important to give way to your elders. Thus the older women who were elected president and treasurer cannot speak or write English.

There are presently two women from the City Church who go regularly to Chitunwiza. You can tell they genuinely love and care for the women there. They pray, read scripture, sing, teach them sewing and basic cooking that can be done over a charcoal fire.

It is Herbert's dream to have a church building at Chitunwiza. Then they could have a literacy school, a food pantry, a day care center, etc. besides a place to worship the Lord. It will have to be done with the help of other Christians because an average weekly collection there is $2.00 -- most people are able to put in 1¢ or 2¢. Remember -- a lot of the house helpers make $55 per month and yet pay the same price as Europeans for cornmeal (their main staple), bread, milk, sugar, etc.

We are thankful to God for providing us with a wonderful house helper -- John Joyo. He has worked at this house for five years so he has his routine down pat. He is also a Presbyterian, an elder in his church, teaches choir and Bible. He and his family have a small house extended back from our garage. I doubt if it is morethan two small rooms. The last tenant here did put an electric outlet in for them so they can boil water for tea without starting a charcoal fire.

The Millers paid John $80 per month and we are going to try to continue that. We also give him sugar, bread, milk, jam and margarine on a weekly basis. That is a carry-over from the old system where you provided tea each day for you helper.

We let John use our stove to cook his evening meal. As far as I can gather John has tea plus his evening meal of sadsa and meat (if you can call it that). Sadsa looks like a white, thick oatmeal or a fluffy, sticky rice. It is the African's mainstay. John says it "makes him strong".

EXCERPS, con't.

The food stores are a nightmare to me. We often eat just fruit and salad because I can't face the meat. Things don't have that sterile, scribbed look like they do in America. Chicken aren't Perdue -- plum and yello. Prices are comparable but then there is an 18% or 23% tax. Bread comes in unsliced loaves -- unwrapped. It is a good price at 35¢. Milk is delivered to the door at 24¢ a pint. However, a glass glass is $4.98 or $6.23 for one. Dumb me, I didn't ship any glasses. Canned fruits and veges seem to run about the same. Orange juice comes in a jar as a concentrate -- you add water to taste. Cocoa to bake with is virtually impossible to gte -- maybe at Christmas. There are very little imported goods. I thought I would buy a china teapot here...no way! They have pottery type teapots only.

Sturge has proved to be an excellent driver and as usual can get us around as if he'd lived here forever. I did some driving yesterday -- believe me, I had to concentrate.

Most Africans walk or ride bikes. Monica, John's wife, walks three miles to her work. She has a day cleaning job. No bus goes out that way. They walk slowly but steadily. The days are hot. Often the women have a small child tied to their back with a blanket. Often you'll see Africans lying on the grass by the raod napping.

John and Monica have four children -- a married daughter with two children, Charles (18 or 19) who goes to the Presbyterian Boarding School and twins, Susan and Paul. He has fees and uniforms for all of them.

Our house is one story, three bedrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen, bathroom with tub, sink and shower, and toilet room. In a corner of the hall we have our desk. There is furniture furnished. The only "sad" furniture is in the living room -- the two chairs and sofa look like motel furniture. But furniture is expensive they say and you have to stay here four years before you can take any furniture out with you. They (the government) are cracking down on people who buy things here and then take them out for re-sale when they immigrate.

The Government does not want to have beggars in the streets. However, people do follow you and ask for money or they come by the house and stand by the back door. This is hard for me. John says some of the people asking are legitimate, other fakes. If I'm alone I tend to give them money because I never know what to say. "I don't have money" is a lie. Often if I walk to get Garth at school I don't take money.

Because of the thieving and even dishonesty with some house help, everyone has locks on everything. I have NEVER seen so many keys in my life! Each window has a latch -- all doors (bedroom/closet/front door, etc.) have their own key. Windows have burglar bars (story about this follows). Even drawers in dressers have keys. Thankfully John is honest. We lock where my pocketbook is and where the camera and box are. But -- the locks are easily picked. Fishing is a current thing -- people stick long poles with hooks through windows and take a wallet off a dresser, etc. We have two rooms with screens all others are just open. Someone needs to be on the premises at all times after dark. We've also decided to ask John to stay in our house with the boys when we are out at night -- we'll give him other time off to make up.

Oh -- the above story. The other day Aaron and his friend, Clyd returned early from basketball. It was Sunday afternno and we were

EXCERPTS, con't.

out so was John's family. Aaron had no key. Clyde opened the top vent window, pushed another window open and climbed through the burglar bars. Made us feel real secure. Fortunately we have the Lord to watch over us and help us in all situations.

Our love to each of you!

Joanne

DRUG QUIZ

Question - Children who slurp soft drinks by the jugful run the risk of turning into caffeine junkies, some nutritionists say. They may show restlessness, irritability, sleeplessness, and nervousness. Which of these popular drinks contains the most caffeine?

A) Coca-Cola B) Pepsi-Cola
C) Royal Crown Cola D) Diet-Rite

Answer- Caffeine, the same stimulant found in coffee and tea, can produce physical dependence as a "sneaky thing", says Cora Kurtz, a nutritionist at the University of Miami. "You don't know you are addicted until you don't drink any," she explained. "Then you go through withdrawal - you get headaches, upset stomach, cold sweats."

According to researchers, caffeine ranges from 66 milligrams in a serving of instant coffee to 110 milligrams in perked coffee. Caffeine content measured in a 12 ounce serving of nine popular colas ranged from 37 milligrams in Diet-Rite to 64 milligrams in Coca-Cola. Correct Anser - A)

Question - Dangers from regular and heavy use of marijuana have now been pinpointed by researchers, according to U.S. News & World Report. Which of these dangers were listed?

a) Impaired brain function and physical performance
b) Impairment of the ability to reason and learn
c) Lung damage similar to that received from excessive smoking of tobacco
d) all of the above

Answer - Parents should be especially concerned by these latest findings listed above because the studies also found that marijuana smoking among teenagers has jumped more than 25% since 1976.

Other dangers included in the report include: Skin tests showing pot is a cancer producing agent; even low doses of marijuana may seriously disturb menstrual cycles and cuase ovulation failures; marijuana may prevent natural sexual development of girls 9 - 13. Findings also indicate that children and adolscents are more physiologically and psychologically vulnerable to the disruptive effects of marijuana use than adults.
Correct answer - d.

February 20, 1984

Greetings from Harare to all our brothers and sisters in the Hebron churches!

It's been so great to hear from so many of you since we've been here. The Epistle even made it here today! God has been strengthening us through all your prayers and we have been able to adjust to this new land pretty well. My work in the church is becoming more established now, after a month on the job. In the morningat about 8 AM I hop into my Renault 12 (1975 model) and drive the 3 km in to the office in downtown Harare. Once or twice a week I ride the bike in to the office. (It's the same blue 5-speed that you used to see me on in Hebron.) Biking is easy because there are no hills and the traffic isn't that bad even in center city. Herbert and I have offices next to each other in the church annex. I stay in the office to prepare my sermons, Bible studies, confirmation classes, etc. Also, here in Harare, the people come to us in our offices for pre-Baptism, pre-marital counseling and other concerns. So my ministry is centered more around the church building than in Hebron. Herbert and I have done one funeral together. It was the first funeral for a white person he had ever done (even though he's been minister here for 8 months). We are trying to show through our actions and our common ministry how Christians of two different cultures can be united in Christ's work. The whites and blacks in the church still are not together in a lot of ministry activities. We are trying to get the working together started by Bible studies in small groups at different homes. The insights of the African blacks are particularly helpful to those of us from a Western background.

Herbert and I divide up our hospital work. I go to the large teaching hospital complex (similar to the Albany Medical Center). It's a huge place and really very modern. Their main problem is staffing as many of the white doctors and nurses are still leaving the country and there are not enough blacks yet trained to take their places. It will be still 5 - 10 years before that can happen. In the meantime they are doing well considering the shortage of skilled workers.

My preaching has been in the city church (services at 7:30 AM and 9:00 AM), at Chitungwiza which is all Shona speaking, and at Harare South (a white preaching "point" amongst the white farmers in the outlying districts). To be honest I enjoy Chitungwiza the most. The Shona people are not inhibited about singing and they are eager to hear God's Word (even if it is coming from a foreigner who needs an interpreter). This week when I preach there our youth group will be going with me to sing. It will be the first time for the white kids in the group ever to go to Chitungwiza. We do have 8 blacks out of 25 in our youth group. The youth is where there is the most promise for a united front in ministry. The young people are actually the most enthusiastic and able evangelists that I've met here. I attend all the young peoples meetings but don't have to lead them except on certain occasions like when I tell them about you back in the U.S.A.

Joanne has been doing alot of work with Alice Chikomo out at Chitungwiza. They work together with the Chitungwiza Womens Assoc. helping them with sewing projects, Girls Brigade (a youth group for Christian girls) and Bible work. Joanne and I are both spending a good deal of time learning Shona. It's essential in Chitungwiza. We go to classes twice a week for two hours. But it will still be

a while before we can really carry on a conversation. We have become good friends with John Goya (our helper) and his family--wife Monicah, and twin children Paul and Susan (15). They are a fine Christian family and have been the vehicles through which God has been bringing about our adjustment (read John 14:16-26 in the Good News Bible). The example that John has shown us as our helper has been the model that I have seen of how Christ would have his people serve. I am constantly reminded that Jesus said that he came to <u>serve</u> and not to be served. That is the challenge to Christians--both black and white here.

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In Christ's love,
Sturge

Friday, March 2,1984

Dear loved ones!

I feel kind of panic stricken as I look at my calender and see that I have not written one letter this week. I am trying to remember what I have done that takes up so much time. I realize that my Shona study is very demanding for me and just like in college I feel that I need to do all that he assigns and it does not come easy. Plus, to make any of it sink in, I have to do alot more then he asks.

One day this week we got eight letters--there was much joy around the house that day. It took me over an hour to read them out loud to Garth--it must have been Tuesday because Garth had that day off from school.

Before I get along too far--I'll send this to my Mom and ask her to make some copies at the college and send them to various ones and then you can continue to share in your areas. I still would prefer to write all individual letters but...I may have every one mad at me if we are not heard from soon (I need a smile key on this typewriter).

Aaron has his last basketball game for the term today. We will go and watch. The rest of the term he has to participate in athletics which is running, etc. He will miss basketball but I am sure he will practice on his own every day. His basketball is about worn thin--not only does he use it but they use it in the games and his friends use it when they practice. John, we may be enlisting your aid to send us another basketball. Aaron will desire a specific type, etc. so we will write about that later.

Sturge and I went to a New Parents Meeting on Wednesday night at Aaron's school. More then half the time was spent in drinking tea--a major past time in Zim. As always I was shy and did not go about introducing myself to teachers, etc. I did meet Aaron's history teacher--a young man in his twenties who is a native Zimbabwean. He seemed quite interesting. He and his wife are in charge of one of the hostels. They have also started coming to City Church and his comment was, "Your husband seems to have a very definite message to present." I liked him because he is open to and excited about change. He deems it a priviledge to be in on the making of a new nation. I'd like to know them better...maybe they would want to come to Wednesday night Bible Study at our house. He did say that it would be nice to not be bound so by the syllabus in teaching.

Prince Edward is a government school (as opposed to a private school) but...we pay $70 plus extra each semester to the P.T.A. With that they maintain the grounds, hire additional teachers to decrease the class room load, etc. so the school is not quite the same as some of the other government schools. Money makes a difference. Paul, John's son, goes to a government school too but...driving through the campus it is nothing like P.E.

Garth is back feeling well and for that we are thankful. He has only had three days of school this week because of the long weekend. He has a Sports Day coming up one Saturday this month.

Tonight is the Induction Service for Sturge into the Southern Africa Presbytery. I gather it is quite a formal service. Last week in church they read the edict for the final time stating that if anyone knew of anything harmful, etc. in Sturge's character that they should come forward and make it known to the Presbytery. If you all had known you probably would have sent someone with made up charges. Aaron and Garth were thinking of making up some good stories so they could get back to the good old U.S.A.

Sturge had to send invitations to other ministers, dignitaries, etc. You know Sturge, he is not wild about all this type of thing either. All the ministers process forward in their robes.

I gather it used to be the case that when a minister was inducted into the Presbytery they used to buy him a new robe. However, since Nick Archer the City Church has been very suspicious of ministers and they do not go out of their way for them. They have been burned and it is all quite fresh in their minds. But, Sturge has a robe--the one from Ardmore and it would be hard to see him in any robe but that.

Sturge particularly wants John and his family to come tonight. They have been such good friends to us. Various ministers will read scripture, pray, give the charge, etc. Maybe similiar to the service at Hebron Camp for Sturge. I keep hoping I'll remember to go to the service--it just hasn't sunk in with me yet.

We found out that yesterday was John's birthday. So, you know how we are about birthdays...I quickly baked chocolate chip cookies and made a pineapple upside down cake while John was with Sturge in Harare. John had been going to pass his birthday by this year because they were "pennyless" but....no way. So, while Sturge and I were at Shona, John and his family ate chicken here with the boys. Then we celebrated when we got home. Garth had the table all laid out and he had even made a Happy Birthday sign which John wore on his shirt. Whenever there is singing, John can't help but sing and so he sung along to himself. We do love him. Sturge gave him money--I had heard him say when he was angry at his son Charles--that he had not bought any church clothes all year so Charles could go to school so I thought maybe he would like to buy a shirt or slacks. He almost did but then he remembered a special collection that they were taking at church and he decided to use the money for that and to pay his church pledge for the month. He said, "Today we can make God happy--it will be his birthday too."

I have been asked to speak at the Afternoon Branch of the Circle about our church and W.A. in Hebron--I hope I can do that without crying. I seem to be a little more emotional now then at first. I have been also asked to be in an Easter "play". I get to read the lines Bobby, that is why I agreed. I have also been asked to co-lead the Evening Circle program on fear. Preparing for all these things takes up time. You'd think that with no having to clean, wash dishes, iron, do laundry, I'd have tons of free time but every night I go to bed with things still undone. I need to be analyzed by an effeciency expert--any one want to volunteer to come over?

Went to Evening Circle Tuesday night. They had asked the women who is presently playing the organ every other Sunday at City to speak. She is from Antigua and I thought it would be kind of a travel log but it was really terrific. She shared with us her personal faith story. She was very open and at times some (most) of the group were a little uncomfortable. They are more used to abstracting things. I loved every word. You could sense the Holy Spirit in her and could see the gifts and power she had that she had not had prior to His indwelling. Plus she has a son who is nearly blind and has other handicaps and how she spoke of him reminded me so of Laurel--what a blessinghe was, how he had brought their family so much closer, how he had taught her how to be thankful, what joy she receives from him, etc. Yes, she said it was hard but she would never trade him or all the hardships for anything. So, I was real glad I had ventured out that night.

I knew that I wouldn't be at peace until we worked out about John and his family. There is no way that what they earn (John--$80 and Monica $40) can pay for even basic expenditures. And I didn't like the paternalistic approach where they had to come "begging" for our help. So, Sturge spoke with them last night after the party and we will provide enough money for them to have regular meals, have money for church, to pay their house rent, etc. Then Sturge will pay for all the school fees for Paul, Susan and Charles and John and Monica if they want to go to night school. I know how I feel myself, it is terrible when you feel you have to grovel to get people to help you. Thankfully God worked in the hearts of people and we never had to talk about money for coming to Zim. But as a minister often you have to lay out your whole spending and then say, please give me a raise. It is not easy. John and Monica both work hard and God wants them to have their daily bread and not to worry. John does not worry. He just trusts in the God, as he says. He takes ones day at a time. But, like me, Monica walks back and forth to work worrying. We are all one family and as best we can we will live like one family.

If any of you have specific questions, please write and ask and hopefully I will eventually answer them. Sherina, I know you are interested in the culture. I will definitely write to you about that. It is very interesting. I may try to find you some books as well.

We got a letter from the Ardmore Women's Association. They are considering some aspect of our work for one of their Spring Mission projects. Sturge is talking with Herbert and Alice to get ideas. I would imagine it would have something to do with Chitungwiza. Herbert thought of sewing machines but until we have a building I wonder where these things could be stored. I will be writing back to Elese (? spelling) soon. It was exciting to get their letter. [Elisa Dormond]

I told John he had a good month for his birthday--he was in good company with Nance and Den and Melissa.

I have to run. Garth just came in and we have to eat and dash to Aaron's game. Hope this makes you feel a little more up on what we are doing.

We love each of you so much and appreciate your prayers and letters and packages and tapes.

Jeanne

XOXO

P.S. My neck & arms are beginning to flare up. Please pray for relief to step!

Mom R.--Nance & Den--Uncle Robe
Mom P.--Don & Sherina--Chic & Theda
John & Bobby--Laurel--Alice--Margaret--Kay & Leon
Cathy

TO THOSE HELD CLOSE THROUGH PRAYER Mon. PM, March 19

It was so great to get our March Epistle in the mail today. Let me tell you, Sturge and I eagerly read every word. Believe it or not, I even read the letters Sturge and I had written. Hopefully this letter will be in time for the April Epistle.

Aaron's school has started and he is in 1A2. They have A & B classes. He takes English, Science, Math, History, Art, Shona and Woodworking. I just looked at his science notebook and was quite impressed. It is a rigid system. There is very little discussion by the students. Teachers lecture and notes are taken in a prescribed way. The feeling is that freedom, even of discussion, leads to a lack of discipline and authority. Students are caned for not doing their homework (also for tons of other reasons!).

Basketball is over for Aaron for this term. He is now in athletics doing high jump, long jump and running.

I chuckle about his basketball. I think it is the best one in the whole area. They would even use it in the official games. Very few kids have basketballs of their own. It is wearing quite thin and I think Aaron plans to write to Uncle John soon to have him send over a new one.

Garth had a big Field Day at his school Saturday. Never have I seen such organization. There must have been 75 events each had a starting time listed by it -- 9:34; 9:35; 9:37, etc. They had all judges synchronize their watches and each event went off exactly as scheduled. There was one false start but there was enough leeway that nothing was affected. Garth ran the 100 meter race and in the 800 meter relay. His house -- Mercury -- won the total points for the day. Now Garth is beginning soccer.

His school notebooks are very structured too. They are not looseleaf and pages cannot be tossed away. He has found it difficult not having any resource books to look up homework questions (our crate has not come). Thankfully Sturge has alot of knowledge in his head!

Sturge's head is getting alot of use! our children, Paul and Susan, Lloyd (Monica's 15 yr. old nephew) plus John and Monica are all going to school. John is taking the 4th grade course; Monica 5th grade in Math, English and Shona. The Night School where they go is tiny and hundreds of Africans come. They mostly have to stand up. Garth quite often helps John with his homework but Sturge always gets consulted as well.

Under the new government jobs are assigned on educational level and so now having a certificate for school is important.

Sturge is slowly getting to know the people. There is not much of a Christian family spirit in the church -- please pray for this...that the congregation will truly be brothers and sisters in Christ -- sharing themselves, their joys, sorrows, needs.

We learned so very much in Hebron! And one of the dramatic lessons was that the more we open ourselves to others, the more the Holy Spirit works. Such power and healing has come through knowing the needs of others. We are Christ's arms and legs and we need to be working. If God gave His Son to die, certainly we can share with others that we are sick and need prayer, that we are cold and need wood, that we are lonely and need a visit. And we need to share this with more than just the pastor. It is often the brothers and sisters who have experienced the same things and through Christ can help you.

MORE...

It really shocked me to find that one of the church elders had died and no mention of it was even made at worship on Sunday. How can we then call ourselves a family?

But --- I have such hope because I look back to what I was when I came to Hebron and how Christ changed me. I look at so many of you who were willing to be open to the Spirit and I see new you's as well; and I know of the oneness in the body that is coming and so I pray with great hopefulness for City Church and Chitungwiza.

I am driving regularly. I don't venture real far. I have driven to Chitungwiza and Dzivaresekwa. Driving in the locations is hard. Side roads are very narrow and since there are few cars people walk six abreast down the road, children play in the streets, etc. Everyone looks at you and I'm sure wonders why you are there.

In one of my conversations with God back in Hebron I realized He wanted me to be more willing to lead and share what I'd learned of him over the years in Hebron. Few people are fortunate enough to have teachers like Sturge, Bobby and Jim so I have been well educated. I know in Hebron I was shy to lead. So, I have tried to say yes here even though my human me wants to say no. For Evening Circle we had a devotional evening dealing with fear and God's help to us in this. To the Afternoon Circle I was asked to tell about our life in Hebron. It was emotional for me as I prepared it and thought back on the growth and love, but God helped me as I shared it. Also, I'm helping with a reading near to Easter. It so reminded me of something Bobby might have created for the Lenten Services.

I have agin had trouble with muscle spasms in my neck. A nurse here just about insisted I go for X-rays and not be so certain it was stress. I did and there is a physical problem -- narrowing of the spaces in C5 - C7 and some slipping. Certain motions then cause pinching and pain. They want me to go to an orthopedic doctor and have a thing called <u>manipulation</u> done. You are out for 3-5 min and they somehow pull on your neck. I've written Dad Poorman for his guidance. Sturge prays each day for freedom from the pain and it is better. The orthopedic doctor can't see me till June 7th. The church must think we are real losers -- our washer breaks, I puncture the freezer unit, my neck "is broken" --- the boys keep hoping they'll just ship us back to America. But as John says, "The washer was repaired, we have a rented refrigerator and God will fix me."

Friday night, March 2nd was the official Induction Service for Sturge in to the Presbytery of Southern Africa and as the assistant pastor at City. It brought back memories of the Induction Service at Hebron Camp. It was quite formal. They read an edict in church for 3 weeks prior announcing it. If anyone had anything against Sturge's theology or character they were to come forward. All minis of Presbytery plus session members processed in. There was a charge to Sturge and one to the congregation. Max Chigwida, who had been at Princeton with Sturge (they did not know each other well) gave the charge to Sturge. Max is head of World Vision in Zim. He said, "If you stay in Africa long and people don't give you a nickname that means they don't like you." So, he gave Sturge the nickname -- Barnabus/Bridge Builder. He spoke of how our family had "sold our fields" to come here in response to God's call. That all the minis could sense the guidance of the Holy Spirit in this call and how it was bringing great hope to the church.

MORE...

POORMAN LETTER, con't

Juan Carlos Ortiz was in Harare for 4 or 5 days. Maybe some of you read his book Disciples. Sturge went to two sessions and was quite challenged and renewed. Juan is one who desires to see Christians come together -- for unity across denominational lines. He speaks against constant study of the Word and listening that does not change us. The Holy Spirit brings action not just knowledge. Churches are not buildings -- we cannot go to church -- church is wherever 2 or more believers are. Our families are the church.

One Sunday he (Juan) was about to preach again on love. However, when the time came all he could say was, "Love One Another," and he sat down for 10 minutes. Again, "Love One Another" and he sat down. People started whispering among themselves. Again the same thing. More and louder talking as people started questioning. For the next 6 months he did not preach a sermon. Each week the people would talk together about their needs. Through the Spirit all the needs of that body were met in 6 months. The next sermon was "Love Your Neighbor". The Spirit brought dramatic change to that body as they had to live the words they heard preached.

Sturge is also spending time getting to know some of the African pastors better.

The Presbytery of Mashonaland in small -- 13 pastors; 7 are in the Harare area. Healing is needed here as well. There are professional jealousies and hurts that need healing. This could be a long term prayer request.

I could write on and on but I must get this in today's mail. (March 21) Even so I think it may come too late for the Epistle. Your letters bring us JOY, your prayers uphold us. We pray for the committee as they seek a new pastor, we pray for the session, we pray for the continued growth of you all -- and we can tell from the letters that the Holy Spirit is alive and working in Hebron. I am thankful we are one in Christ and part of His family together. Miles can not separate us!

In love,

Joanne

THY THIS ONE ON...

I would like to buy $3 worth of God, please, not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I don't want enough of Him to make me love a black man or pick beets with a migrant. I want ecstasy, not transformation; I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the Eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy $3 worth of God, please.

Wilbur Rees

...FIT A LITTLE TOO WELL?

Taken from the book Improving Your Serve by Charles Swindoll

April 15, 1984

LETTER TO ALL OF US FROM POORMANS

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Hebron --

It's autumn here in Zimbabwe -- although I can't see much difference from the summer just past. It is still warm and sunny most every day. I do wear a jacket every morning when I ride my bike into the office but by 1 PM when I ride home for lunch it is in the 70's or low 80's so the jacket is unnecessary. Last Wed. evening riding home at 6:30 PM I almost ran over a big snake in the road. It is dark by 6:30 and my little headlamp on the bike doesn't shine too far ahead. Actually I didn't even wait around to see if the snake was alive or dead. As the Bible says, "Don't look back once you have put your foot to the pedal". Or maybe it's "leave the dead (snakes) to bury their dead." See -- the Bibles here in Zim aren't that different!

Today is Saturday, Aaron and Garth have gone to play soccer with our church soccer team. I can't play today as I am going to Chitunwiza with Rev. Chikomo to visit in the homes and to take provisions for the poorer families. Mostly we'll be taking "mealie meal" (corn meal) for them to make sadza (the basic meal of Shona people). We hope to get to meet some of the husbands today. The church there in Chitunwiza is still made up of primarily women, children, and teenagers. On Sundays the men seem to go to the beer gardens, the soccer matches, or the political rallies (quite some competition). Please do pray for the men -- particularly the husbands of the Christian women. Though the women are strong believers, it is still a male oriented society here. And if some of the men became committed in their faith, then leadership could really provide a spark for Christ's work here. Really it has been through the women, that God has been blessing the African Church here in Zimbabwe. But it is not God's will that they do it alone.

Joanne and Alice Chikomo are also off to Chitunwiza to work with the women today. Joanne will do some singing for them today and try to teach them some "American" Christian songs. They really enjoy it whenever Joanne goes out there. Even the little babies are beginning to be less frightened when the strange person with the funny colour takes them into her arms.

Today marks exactly three months that we have been in Harare. God has blessed us during that time in giving us the ability to adapt as a family to our new surroundings. As you recall I shared with you before we left that I could see our call to Zimbabwe as something God would use to strengthen our family. He is doing that in very subtle ways: in our sharing of letters from home, in our association with John and Monica's family, in our sharing of new experiences both good and bad. Oh we do have the disagreements and complaints of any family - Zimbabwean or American - but the sense of Christ's presence with us pervades (as in Matt. 28:20). Pray for us that we do not get into a rut as the newness wears off. I can see that it would be easy to get into a rut here. The days are very similar - one after another. The church work can fall into a pattern where the Spirit is not leading and things stay the same. It happened that way in Rhodesia for so many years. Satan would have the church stay the same -- for in ten years it would be dead. He would have our family fall into a rut of predictability for in a short time we would be tired of all this and ready to come home. So pray that as a family we will be close in Christ and open to the new things He offers us

MORE...

POORMAN"S LETTER, con't.

every day/ And pray that I will keep before me the vision of a ministry of believers - black and white - reconciled in Christ, doing the special work He has for us to do in this city and in this new country.

I ask for your prayers since I know they have helped us greatly and have been instrumental in the healing of Joanne's neck. So -- keep it up! We love you!

In Christ,

Sturge Poorman

LETTER FROM TOM ROGERS

The most exciting event we do each year is the Florida Spring Break Trip. Plans are well underway and we'll be taking 320 kids to Vero Beach, Florida, for fun in the sun and a trip to Disney World! Our departure date is March 31st with a planned return date of April 7th. Knightstown and Tri look to have 20 to 25 kids going. The kids look forward with special interest to spring break, because January through the end of March offers only two days off from school with an occasional snow day. Therefore, the last few weeks of March are a zoo both in school and in club, as kids look forward to the time off. Our 320 charges are just itching to get to the beach and relax!

Campus Life does a Florida trip to share Christ with the unsaved and disciple those who know Christ personally already. The beach, Disney World, tans, basketball tourneys, games, music, and all the other fun things we do are merely an attraction or a bridge of opportunity to confronting a teen for Christ. Out of their high school environment, they have time to listen and are very open to consider Christ. As you can discern, this is an important time for us and the kids. We need your prayers for safety, good meetings, opportunities to share, and discernment in discipline situations. There are so many situations where we need the Lord's guidance and wisdom. Please be praying for us.

In Chist,

Tom Rogers

May 1984

TO OUR FAMILY IN CHRIST --

To day the mail brought the very welcome sight of a package in Alice's handwriting which I knew contained the Epistle. What a joy it was to read of all the happenings in Hebron and anyone who would read the Epistle would KNOW the Holy Spirit is working with power. How we thank God for that as we continue to pray for all of you.

I was quite excited about the new format which the Flower Show is taking on -- a luncheon in a floral setting. Also... do I dare ask who won the hot election for Sunday School superintendent?

This weekend marks the 75th Anniversary of the laying of the City Church cornerstone. Last night there was a carry-in supper. Following that the Youth Fellowship sang and presented an updated skit of the Good Samaritan. That parable hits very close to home here in Zim. In Bulawayo the dissidents continue to be active. Curfews are inforced. People live in fear. For them the war is not over. You see Bulawayo is Ndebella territory and alot of the people there are ZAPU (the party not in power). There is still much hostility between the two groups. So, there are many white and African Christians who live in this area and who can only get a sense of peace from the Lord.

Following the YP entertainment, Harry Stone, one of the older church members gave a breif history of the church. There was a table with photos, etc. It was interesting to me as I know very little about the Church. As it turns out, City Church was the first Presbyterian Church and due to its outreach churches have been established in both white suburbs and African locations.

To day there is a Tree Planting to symbolize the hope, future and desired growth of our City Church. Garth has been asked to be one of the dirt shovelers.

Tomorrow there will be a special service of thanksgiving to God. This will be followed, of course, by a TEA. Then we hope to pack lots of cars and make a caravan out to Chitungiza. This will include them in the celebration.

Again, Sturge and I got to visit a Zimbabwe Farm. I guess they are more like the southern plantation type than the Hebron Family Farm. There were about 100 employees on this farm. It's main crops were soybean and maize. There was a huge rented reaper but the reaping of soybeans by the women brings a better price because there is less soil stain. We noticed in the dairy barns that there are no bulk tanks. Milk is still put in metal cans and sent out each day by truck.

Rainham Farm where we visited this past week had a 500 pupil school on its premises. Mr. Dawson owns and operates the school (called Rainham School). Other area farmers send children there. It is government inspected but Mr. Dawson has to build the buildings, hire the teachers and Head Master, buy books, etc. Teaching is done in English, then translated into Shona. This happens to be the school that Max Chigwida, now head of Zim World Vision, went to as a child. His dad was a tractor driver for Mr. Dawson.

Aaron got his report card today. Grades are based on how the total class did -- the old curve system. There were 33 pupils in Aaron's 1A2 Section and so all of his grades were something over 33. Then each teacher wrote a comment.

I am beginning to feel led to use our home as the place where we get to know people. We had our first dinner guest last Wednesday night -- a man from Ghana who is seeking work as an Accounting teacher. He is living at the Y as he awaits a work permit. Maybe

POORMAN LETTER, con't.

by knowing people in a more personal way I can begin to reach out to people.

Sturge is eager to begin the flats evangelism. He has 2 or 3 volunteers so now they can begin and trust the Spirit to guide and direct them.

Bob arrives next Sunday, May 27th at 2:45 PM. We plan to be at the Harare Airport to give a big hug. I'd ask you to to write to him. Words can't express how valuable letters are when one is so far from the familiar. (c/o Bud and Mandy Jackson, Box 25, Rusape, Zimbabwe)

I went to Dr. Nangle about my neck spasms. He said to be thankful I was free from pain and to come back when it reoccurred. He said it is a common problem but usually with older people. My X-rays did show narrowing and when the muscles get inflamed they pinch the nerves.. He would treat by anti-inflamatory drugs, electrical stimulus to relieve pain and/or manipulation. He said my neck is quite loose so any jerk could set it off. Asked if I did alot of motorcycle riding, horseback riding. I said no -- I mostly wrote letters. Thanks for all your prayers! God has shown me great mercy in freeing me from pain.

Our Prayer Meeting is getting off to a slow start and I have to resist being sad when I walk into the room and none of you are there. But, we have taken the first step and God will bless us. We have already been encouraged by answers.

Herbert could use your prayers. He yearns to retire but senses God still wants him serving. His health is not good and so that effects his whole outlook.

We continue to pray for the East and West Hebron churches -- for them to truly explode with the Spirit's power so the whole area will be effected. We are confident in God's working to bring you a new pastor and we know you will be a gift to him/her as well as the person will be a gift to you. We pray each of you will know the gift(s) the Spirit has bestowed on you and that you will use that gift now and when the new pastor comes as the church is not the pastor but the full body of believers serving in obedience.

Love,

Joanne

Dear Sturge and Joanne,

Subscriptions have tripled because of your international contributions to the Epistle. Thank you for your faithfull correspondence! Smile, Ed(itor)

EXCERPS FROM A LETTER TO SARA JANE

One term has ended for Aaron and Garth and they are half way through a month long holiday. We took a three day mini-vacation to Nyanga -- a mountain area 3½ hours from here. Some of the mountains were sheer rock -- not a tree! Orchards grew at the base of the mountains. We stayed in a cottage owned by the Highlands Presbyterian Church. Paul and Susan went with us. They are very much part of our family. There was no electricity but a generator run by motor oil provided light. It was so noisy we just used the

SARA JANE LETTER , Con't.

fire and candles. Some of the terrain we explored was very unspoiled. A "tourist spot" has no neon signs, no refreshment stands with t-shirts that say "My granny came here and left me home", no toilet you just have the sight. It is nice and yet there is the frightened part of me -- will we see a snake?/a wild animal? A waterbuck jumped out in front of us on the road to Fort Inyongombi. I pray alot as we walk along.

ALSO, last Saturday Sturge and I went to a Shona village area- where Monicah grew up. Her mom lives there and we were taking some of the kids to harvest maize. Her mom was so ... excited we came. She couldn't do enough for us. In appreciation she gave us a live chicken. I thought, "What do you do with it?" She tied the feet together and told Sturge to open the trunk. It was a nice, fat hen. I didn't have the heart to kill it so John is out back building a coop for it. Presently it is at the neighbors. So.. we may be in the chicken business -- Farmer Joanne, right?!?

Later -- Sturge is off at his Shona class. I have a coffee cake in the oven. Garth and Aaron are writing letters. Paul is watching TV. Yes, we did buy a second hand TV from a lady who immi- grated. There is one channel so -- if what is on doesn't suit, off it goes. Aaron said he misses live sports. Here the scores are known and then you see the game knowing full well who has won.

Worship here is different. It seems more formal. I miss the sharing of blessings and concerns. I miss Dinners for Eight. I miss Prayer Meeting. As I look back I realize how many miracles we saw in Hebron. God does answer prayer!

There is a lot of singing here in worship; four hymns with maybe 5 to 8 verses. Alot of the tunes are different and that is frus- trating. There are no notes in the hymnbook -- only the words. We sing the Lord's Prayer -- I like that! We also sing the Avery and Marsh Doxology which is peppy. And we sing an Amen at the close of the service.

Aaron plays basketball every day. He will have to play rugby this term but 3rd term he can do basketball again. Garth will play soccer.

Margaret (Worthington-Smith) Mallows phoned. She hopes to visit us in July for ten days. It will be so good to be with her.

Even though we are half way round the world we have been strengthened through your prayers. We miss you and receive joy knowing how you all are.

Love, Joanne

Greetings to all partakers in the Gospel through prayer!

Please pardon this generic letter, but God has blessed me with so many supporters that it's the only way I can keep in touch with you all. I'm excited about the ministry that God has entrusted me with in Zimbabwe and once again I call on you for help. Will you stand with me in prayer? Some of you have already shared with me that you are praying and I am encouraged by your desire to be a part of this ministry in Jesus' Name. Below I have listed 7 crucial areas (one for each day of the week) and I'd greatly appreciate you partnership in prayer. The most active role that any person can take in this ministry is to pray for it daily. May God richly bless you as you share in the work of His Kingdom!

In Jesus' Service,
Bob Myers

Colossians 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, Keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.

Sunday - Pray for the Holy Spirit's annointing upon my life and ministry there so that I may be bold in proclaiming the gospel and that the Holy Spirit would reap a great harvest of souls. (John 6:44, Ephesians 6:19)

Monday - Pray for the successful initiation of youth ministry in the governments secondary boarding school. Pray for effective and fruitful evangelism and discipleship of these high school students into the Rusape Community Church. (Romans 15:20)

Tuesday - Pray for the "Evening School of the Bible" I'll be leading. Pray that the New Testament Survey will stimulate people to read their Bibles and develop their relationship with the Lord through the Word. (Isaiah 55:11)

Wednesday - Pray for my personal relationships with my host family new brothers and sisters in Christ, and those who have yet to trust in the Lord Jesus. May all these relationships be Christ-honoring and edifying. (1 Thess. 2:8)

Thursday - Pray for my health, protection, physical as well as spiritual energy to zealously serve and minister. (Galations 6:9)

Friday - Pray for RAIN!! The situation is serious. Many will starve if rain doesn't come. Many are starving now. The city where I'm living is a dust bowl. Even the yards are dust. (2 Chronicles 7:13-14)

Saturday - Most of all pray that I might have a strong walk with Jesus by feeding on His Word and praying. Pray that Jesus Christ will be glorified and shine in everything that we do. (Colossians 1:9-12)

Bob Myers
c/o Bud Jackson
Box 25
Rusape, Zimbabwe
AFRICA

May 25 - August 21

DEAR FRIENDS IN THE HEBRON CHURCHES -- 6-17-84

Greetings from not-so-warm Zimbabwe. It's winter now and the evening and morning temperatures are in the low 40's. My bike riding has thus been somewhat curtailed. I now wish I had not left my winter gloves back in the U.S.A. Yet it always gets up into the 70's during the afternoon so we really can't complain. It's been a month now since we've seen any trace of rain, and since it is the dry season, it may be five months more before any rain comes! Please pray that there can be some rain -- even in the dry season! This past month has been brightened by the appearance of a familiar face -- Bob Myers! He arrived on May 27th and we were able to meet him at the airport. The plane arrived early so unfortunately we missed waving to him as he stepped onto African soil but Bob says he was so wiped out by the long trip that he wouldn't even have noticed the waves. Later that week, after his orientation, we took him out to Rusape (pronounced rū sop ā) a two hour drive from Harare. We've talked to him on the phone twice since then and hear that the Rusape "winter youth ministry" is being blessed with many high school boys eager to learn about faith in Christ. Bob is working with them and answering their questions, and spreading Christ's truth. Whether it's in Hebron or in Zimbabwe the need is there -- God is able to cut through the cultural barriers.

As far as my own ministry goes there are some encouraging signs relating to evangelistic outreach among the members of the City Church. The young people are particularly willing to share their faith within their schools. There are also six others who have volunteered to do evangelistic work in the flats. We were ready to begin two weeks ago with a meeting in one of the flats of a church member. She had invited some friends who were willing to come and hear what we would share about our faith. But as the day drew nearer her husband, who is not a Christian, decided he would not let them meet there. So we are still looking for a place to begin. Our outreach is mainly aimed at the blacks rather than the whites who are still steadily leaving the contry. The fact is -- we have very few black church members living in the nearby flats. Yet it is in the flats of such members where we wish to begin -- using their places as "mission points" with their friends as those with whom we will share our faith. Please pray that all barriers will break down and that we will be able to begin this work soon!

I have been encouraged in my learning of Shona by the Chitunwiza Christians. When I lead the worship there I try to do all the service except the sermon in Shona. They really appreciate that and their appreciation spurs me on. My first Shona course is over and now I have a new teacher - Mrs. Amai Musasiwa. She has three students - two Australian missionaries and myself. We use the Gospel of John as our text. She also helps me in preparing things to say to the people in their homes and in preparing worship services. She says that God has led her to this ministry of using her gifts in language and in teaching to His glory. She literally appeared at my Shona class on the last day of the course. We had been praying about what I could do when that course finished -- and there she was! It was definitely an answer to prayer.

MORE...

Joanne is well - thanks for all your prayers for her neck. Now that our things have finally arrived from the U.S. (May 24th) we are doing more entertaining. Joanne, of course, is very gifted at using our home for ministry. And with John's help - well we see this as one way God will use to bring about reconciliation and a common ministry as people meet together for food and fellowship in our home and eventually in the homes of others. Still, whites and blacks - even church members - rarely mix in each others homes. God is beginning to break down those barriers.

Aaron and Garth are back in school until Aug. 10th. Both were palying soccer this term, but Aaron sustained a foot injury in gym class and has been out of action for two weeks. That also means out of action for basketball practicing -- which he had been doing faithfully every day. He goes to an orthopedic doctor this Friday (June 22). X-rays have been negative but there is still a big bulge up by his arch. We would appreciate your prayers for him as well.

Garth is doing very well in school and has an excellent teacher. His name is Mr. Webb -- but of course must be addressed as "Sir". Last week the Headmaster came in to inspect the class and gave a long speech. The boy behind Garth fell asleep during the speech. Needless to say the "Head" was not pleased. Result - 5 lashes! Aaron, Garth and I all play on the church SOCCER TEAM. We have only won one game since January. There are some <u>good</u> soccer players here in Zimbabwe!

The next big family event will be John and Monica's wedding on Aug. 11th. Yes, John and Monica are getting married! Oh they have been married according to the civil authorities for 24 years, but now, as John has satisfied all the lobollo (dowry) requirements and paid the "cattle price", the <u>Christian</u> wedding can proceed. It is not necessary that one be married in a Christian service, but the African churches are encouraging this of their members - especiall those such as John who would make good church elders. So -- after the wedding at City Church -- an African reception at our house! Sadza, nyama (meat), singing, dancing, etc. Needless to say - Joanne is in charge of the arrangements.

Speaking of sadza (the staple food of the Shona people) -a finely ground corn meal made into a thick porridge. The shipment from the U.S. has come in (US food aid because of the drought). They are now eating <u>yellow</u> sadza instead of <u>white</u>. It's taking sme time to get used to - but sadza is sadza. Thank you U.S.! It will save many people from starving. World Vision, Church World Servi ce, and others are also helping.

Keep on praying for us! Much is being accomplished through your prayers. We are praying for you too!

In Christ's service,

Sturge

23 July, 1984

Dear Sisters and Brothers--

I hear there is a rumor going around that Garth and I were charged by an elephant. Actually that's not exactly true. It was the car that we were riding in that was charged. Garth just happened to be on top of the car at the time! It all started with a leisurely drive through the Mana Pools National Park. Garth and I were camping there along with Bob Myers (and three others who knew the bush much better than we). Wildlife there is plentiful--especially in this dry season. Lion, rhinos, elephant, hippos, etc. wander around unhindered by fences or humans (no firearms are allowed). On our late afternoon drive as we headed back to our campsite we encountered a "Mama" elephant with her baby. Unfortunately our car startled her as we came around the bend (or maybe it was Garth sitting on the roof of the car that did it.). Anyway the elephant let out a holler, spread her huge ears out wide and charged! There was no way for the car to go but backwards--full speed--as the elephant kept within a few yards at a "thundering pace". There was no way for Garth to go but in--the side window, that is (which was fortunately open). I, sitting in the back seat, had the choice of two remarkable sights. One--a charging elephant; the other--a son without any color in his face. After about a mile in reverse at full speed over a bush road the elephant was satisfied that she had sufficiently intimidated us. The chase was over, but we waited a good while before starting up again--this time very cautiously. Back at the camp we had great stories to tell Bob--who had stayed behind suffering from "African stomach".

That trip gave us a real sense of the African bush and a healthy respect for the wildlife. At Mana Pools we camped right out with the animals. The nights are especially exciting. We would hear the hippos snorting in the Zambesi River. While we tried to sleep the lions roared in the darkness. Badgers, monkeys and hyena would raid our camp and depart with their "spoils". A spotlight into the blackness would reveal Cape buffalo and waterbuck wading by the riverside while the red dots in the Zambezi turned out to be reflections from crocodile eyes. Garth had trouble sleeping as an elephant wandered too close to our tent just before dawn. Others, like myself, who were already wide awake, just trusted that the elephant could see where he was going. The nights were anything but silent. But it was sure worth the lost sleep to experience God's creatures come alive in the dark.

Though this letter is very much a travelogue of the wilds of Africa, you should remember that our everyday life is spent among cars and buildings and people--not rivers and mountains and lions. And God has sent me here to minister to people and to help them to do ministry for Christ in this new country. We are still needing to come together in this ministry--blacks and whites working together with the common purpose of proclaiming Christ in word and in action. I noticed that out in the bush the animals naturally tended to stick with their own kind. Yet, there were exceptions. The impala and the baboon were always found together--an unlikely combination--but one that afforded a sense of security and protection. We Christians here in Zimbabwe

(and anywhere else for that matter) often make unlikely combinations--rich/poor; old/young; black/white; emotional/staid. But just like the impala and baboon we have a common purpose. And ours is not just for a common defense against the "world". Our oneness is for the common "attack" of the proclamation and proof that Christ is the Hope in a very uncertain existance.

With God's help we will "get it together" as Christians. As we do the appearances may seem to the world rather awkward. (If you've ever seen me trying to dance at an African worship service you'll know what I mean.) But the results of the one-ness will speak for themselves. And then even the world will not be able to ignore Him. Deny maybe--but not ignore! Jesus Christ will make a difference in Zimbabwe!

In Christ's Service,

LETTER FROM THE POORMANS

To Our Hebron Family -

Alot has gone on this past month. It has been a mixture of joy and sorrow -- maybe bittersweet would describe it. I need to trust that God will work through it all to bring us all deeper understanding of how He works.

I have had a hard month health-wise. I had a cold/flu that lasted over a week. I kept trying to get up and going because I had things I wanted to do for John and Monicah's wedding.

The pre-wedding time was very hard for Monicah as her brother went into the hospital two weeks prior with a headache and sore throat and each day found him worse rather than better. Her brother David was the head of their family (sekuru) as her father is dead. He is responsible for the care of their mother, the upkeep of their home (musha) in the tribal trust area, etc. His not being at the wedding was hard.

Considering the stress on the family about David, the wedding went well. John and Monicah took the vows very seriously as non-Christians can have more than one wife and this was cementing their commitment to each other.

The reception was at our house. It was a hot day and so all the people sat along our hedge to get some shade. It looked funny with an empty lawn and a line-up around the hedge. Choirs sang, people danced and all the gifts were presented. All the food was cooked over a fire on our side yard.

Often wedding celebrations go on for days but with David sick everyone left about 5:30 PM and the family all went to the hospital.

That Monday (Aug. 13), Sturge and Richard (the only other brother) went to talk with the doctors. They found that David had cancer of the thyroid and medically nothing could be done for him. It was becoming a real effort for him to breath. On Thursday the family took him home to the Tribal trust land and he died early Saturday. A wedding and a funeral in one week.

Through this death I am seeing the African culture and their long standing beliefs in ancestral spirits. God has always been a big part of their life. However for years they knew nothing of Christ and so prayed to God through their dead ancesters as they felt they certainly weren't worthy to approach Him on their own. As individuals came to Christ they were still influenced by their families and often in a crisis went along with the old ways. In death the family often feels they are being punished by the spirit of another person who is against them.

I went to Monicah's home each of three days. The family knows me and is very loving and inclusive. However others didn't know me and I did stick out as the only white person. I could feel the presence of the evil spirits. Satan was at work. I'd try to explain how even in the U.S. people die of thyroid cancer, etc. but the fear was there! And the power of the dead person's spirit was there. It was hard for them to believe that I believed a dead person could have no power over me. The all-sufficiency of Christ is lacking even on alot of the Christians. I think the church is guilty as well. It is a complex issue and one they don't want to face. I think they fear losing alot of their members if they force a renunciation of the ancestral spirits. But yet what kind of power is there in Christ if in crisis he is one of many gods?

MORE...

It was the first time I had heard wailing. Many of the people fell on the ground sobbing. Many lost their voices. It took a lot out of them and I was concerned that they might get physically sick.

Bob was here through the funeral time and he said he felt right at home with me dashing off just as I had in Hebron. Heidi Waite came the day David died and she stepped into being the cheif cook and dishwasher. She said her 13 years across the street from us had prepared her well.

What a gift the visits of Bob and Heidi are to us! Just to be with someone who knows you. And our prayer times with Bob when we could pray for our families, VBS, SYM, PNC, etc and all know the people. It was GREAT!

A few days before the wedding I fell coming out of the Food Store -- my leg just gave way. Right after the wedding my neck spasms returned and I have had quite a bit of pain. Please have me in your prayers! I have a doctors appointment August 23rd.

Sturge thankfully has been well. We offered a lot of prayers for him as with Herbert on leave he needs to be well. He was quite busy helping the Chitunwiza women get to Zambia for a W.A. Conference. He had to find money, get passports, photos, etc. Also he was asked by the Presbytery to moderate the Hatfield Session. Their pastor suddenly resigned -- he felt the session was not supporting him in reaching out to church members through visitation and also drawing Africans into the body. So -- Sturge can use his reconciliation gifts here. Thankfully his experience with Ministerial Relations work has prepared him well.

Aaron has gotten contacts and he loves them! God had Bob here at the right time to help him put them in, etc. The boys are on vacation till Sept. 11th. They will go with Heidi to Victoria Falls for one night.

City Church is experiencing some growing pains in the choir as some of us want to sing some anthems and introits that are a little livlier. Tune in next month to see if I get thrown back into the congregation.

Please keep praying for us. Without God's strength I'd be on the next plane home. We miss you all!

Love,

Joanne

Sept. 18, 1984

To all our Brothers and Sisters in the Hebron Churches,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus from sunny Zimbabwe! Summer is here again with temperatures in the 80's each day. The flowering trees are ahloom in bright reds, yellows, blues and purples. Especially evident are the purple jacaranda trees which line the main avenues of the city during September and October. It's amazing that these trees can be so beautiful when it has not rained at all for four months. There must be moisture down there somewhere! Actually I must correct that earlier statement about rain. Last week for the first time in four months, I washed my car. You guessed it! The next day --- the first rain since May. Well, at least I've figured out a cure for the drought.

The end of August saw the departure of Bob Myers, and the arrival of Heidi Waite. Their visits have made the world seem smaller. Their being here has been evidence in the flesh of your love for us. Heidi was very flexible (you have to be when you live with us) as we showed her the "sights" of Zimbabwe. Her stomach was not quite as flexible but then whose is when coming to a strange land? She and Aaron and Garth did make it to Victoria Falls -- the old folks stayed home. They took a flight on one of those four-engine propellor planes that were flying around the U.S. in the 50's. They had a great time. You might ask Heidi sometime why the three of them were the favorites of the hotel staff at Victoria Falls.

During the past month we've had the first real contact with our Muslim neighbors in the house next door. Since most houses, including ours, have 10-12 foot walls or hedges around them with locked gates leading into the driveways, contact is not that easy. It turns out that our neighbors are very important people in the Muslim faith here in Harare. Mr. Menk - he is from India - is the foremost expert in the Koran (the Muslim "Bible") here in the city and is a leader of the Muslim community in Zimbabwe which is about 70,000 strong. Mr. Menk was in Mecca at the time, but I talked with one of his married sons who lives there at his home. In the course of our conversation he explained to me of a feast they were currently having commemorating Abraham's obedience in beeing willing to sacrifice his son. The only problem is that he said it was Ishmael whom Abraham took with him to the mountain. We Christians and Jews, following Genesis 22 say the son was Isaac. But it was not a time for argument so he proceeded with his account of the feast. He said it was customary for an animal to be sacrificed during the feast and for the Muslim family to give 1/3 of the meat to the poor, 1/3 to their neighbors, and keep 1/3 for themselves. He told me he would be stopping by the next day with some of the meat. I wasn't sure if we were the poor or the neighbors, but he was very gracious and I accepted the offer.

Sure enough, the next day over he came with the meat. I received it with thanks but did venture to ask what kind of meat it was hoping not to offend. He said he wasn't sure (he hadn't attended the sacrifice) but that it was either a camel, a buffalo, or a cow. And off he went. We "chickened" out and didn't eat it. John however was convinced it looked like regular beef and his

family were the recipients of the Muslim's generosity. But at least the lines of communication have been opened.

Interestingly enough later that week we had opportunity to engage in outreach evangelism in the flats around the church. A young man who had been raised as a Muslim had become interested in following Christ. After hearing some of our people share their faith in Christ he too accepted Christ into his heart and turned his life over to Him. His name is Russell and God has encouraged us through him as he is the first evidence of God's blessing of our evangelistic work among the flat dwellers.

We praise God that Joanne is healthy again! And we thank you for your prayers. Here we intensified our prayer efforts for Joanne's healing from the neck spasms. Periodically during our Sunday evening service we have a time of special prayers for healing in the name of Christ, for those who want to ask for these prayers. Joanne was one who requested such prayers at the Sept. 2nd evening service. The elders present and myself gather round and place our hands upon the person and pray while the rest of the group (usually about 20) prays silently. God has blessed these efforts of ours even as faltering as they may be. Jesus' encouragement in Mark 16:18 has given us confidence. Through your prayers, and those here, Joanne's neck got remarkably better that next week and she is now free from pain with only a little "tingle" in her arm to remind her of the healing still to come.

Update from last month..... Joanne is still in the choir - they haven't thrown her out yet. But with all the new choir members the growing pains are still there..... Aaron's contacts are working out well - they certainly work out better for basketball. He is practicing with the first team now..... The youth fellowship celebrated Garth's birthday with a night of miniature golf and then a cake back at the church. Garth is playing cricket this term..... My work at the neighboring Presbyterian Church where I am interim moderator has been time consuming. It's a white church and they haven't really tackled the racial issue yet. But it's part of my job to help them do it. Please pray for me. The name of the church is the Hatfield Presbyterian Church..... John's family is returning to more normal times after the wedding and the funeral..... We're looking forward to Bobby Poorman's visit in November. Just tell her to bring some lomotil.

We love you all very much! And we can feel your love for us--even 9000 miles away. Thanks for your letters and your prayers!

In Christ's Service,

Sturge

So let's hear it Heidi. Why were you three (Aaron, Garth, and self) such favorites at the Victoria Falls Hotel? Could this be an upcoming episode on ABC's 'Hotel"?

Ed.

Sunday, October 21, 1984

Dear loved ones in Hebron--

As I write this I know that this is the weekend some of the PNC has gone to Syracuse to interview candidates face-to-face. We have been praying for the committee and for God to lead them and help them be united in sensing His guidance. Sturge has been going through a similiar experience as he helps the Hatfield Church seek their new pastor. It has meant long hours and many phone calls.

The Presbyterian Church here in Zim seems to be in hard times leadership wise. Quite a few of the white pastors are immigrating and there are no African or white Zimbabwean Presbyterians in seminary at this point. The few pastors left are being shuffled around to do baptisms, communion, etc. and often many of the churches are being led by the lay people. I guess what it makes me realize is how fortunate a church is to have their own pastor. But again maybe this calling on the law people helps them to the maturity we all need to strive for in Christ. Sturge preached a few Sundays ago on the necessity to believe Christ is the only way and the impetus that then gives us to reach out. Again I was surprised and frightened by how many people who have gone to worship regularly for years do NOT believe this. They believe Christ is the way for them but there are other ways just as valid to God. And I thought how sad or frustrated God must be that after years and years of Christianity He must still feed us milk. How can we then be prepared to lead other?

Sturge was away last weekend in Gweru. He was asked by the Matabeland Presbytery to be a part of the team to evaluate the Presbyterian Church there. It is the most drained I have seen him since coming here. They talked with representatives of each church group, made home visits, talked to the pastor, etc. and then had to evaluate and help the church prepare for its future. It was nonstop work that involved peoples feelings and emotions.

While he was gone we had an unusual amount of family shake-ups. First Aaron lost his gym bag with uniform, books, notes etc. at a visiting school where he played basketball. The notes were what concerned him most as the Zim system has exams that cover years of work and all you have to study from are your notes. I learned something from the whole experience that I should have known--it was that after I pray to give God time to work. That night when I prayed with Aaron I did not feel hopeless but I felt that the bag would be found. However, my actions did not reflect that because on Monday afternoon I went and replaced the books etc. that had been in his bag. On Wednesday the bag was returned--an answer to our prayer.

Also Aaron had a bike accident while Sturge was gone and due to a faulty tire went over the handle bars onto his head. He was experiencing some shock when he got home here and I had no idea whether to try to find a hospital. The few people I knew of to phone were out and all Aaron wanted to do was sleep. I prayed with he and Paul and asked for healing and that if I was to take him

to the hospital that God would shout that fact out to me. That evening those at Evening Service lifted him up in prayer as well. Monday when I took him to our doctor he said all was well and the rest and prayer had brought wholeness. This has been the second accident when Sturge has been gone and thankfully God has guided me and provided people to pray. He has been my strength. The boys always mention Alice Coldwell at these times and how she used to always come to give aid and encouragement in Hebron when someone was hurt.

Presently there is a Gospel Crusade going on in Harare. A Pastor Borke and his team from Germany. They are preaching many times each day at the Showground and have provided for buses to and from all the high density suburbs. He came down hard on dead religion and told of a dying woman of 90 years who had been to church every Sunday of her life that she could recall and when he asked her if she knew Jesus as Lord and Savior of her life she said "No." His sermon was on the Holy Spirit (From Ezekiel 47) and how we need to totally allow the Holy Spirit to carry us--enter so far into the river that our own feet can no longer touch bottom. I thought I would be turned off by the whole thing but instead I felt myself saying thank you to God for all the many people that were hearing God's word, that the message was biblicial, that the cards they gave those who came forward were all filled with sound biblical guidance. Bonke came out strongly against ancesteral spirits, telling how Christ is sufficient through the Holy Spirit to meet all our needs.

There are some hindrances to the Chitungwiza work. The Lutherans from who we rent have gotten a grant to build a new church so after the rainy season they will tear down this building. Also they have said we can no longer use the bhilding for Saturday afternoon W. A. Club. The word is that there is some jealousies--I truly hope that is not the case. This I know is putting more pressure on Herbert to get a stand of our own but the council is still not eager to give plots to churches. We could use your prayers here.

The Chitungwize youth have been more active--gathering each Sunday at noon. During this time they also learn a song to present at worship. One of the girls had asked me to type up songs for them and then we made choir notebooks. Let me tell you, proof reading in Shona is tough. I have no idea whether I'm providing them with good copy.

We are counting the days till Bobby comes--as you can well imagine! Her visit will be a special gift. Also--the letters are still as much awaited for as when we first came here. Though God has made this our home, He still continues to let us love you deeply. Maybe Bobby's perceptions will fill in gaps for you that we have overlooked. For any others of you who desire a trip to Zim--our door is always open!

Please be praying for our first Christmas here. It will be different--hot weather (everyone wants rain!) and no brunch with Waites and Coldwells, no Campbells to share with and no family.

We'll have to start new traditions and keep in mind that Christmas is Jesus and He is with us here.

Continue to become a true family in Christ--that is so..... needed at City. We are seeing relationships develop and we know our time here is not as much as it was in Hebron. We love you all!

Joanne

DRUG QUIZ

QUESTION: Which of these substances may be ingested before drinking alcoholic beverages to prevent intoxication?

a) Milk
b) Eggs
c) Bread
d) None of the above

ANSWER: Nothing will keep alcohol from having its effect. Eating before and while drinking, especially starch foods, will slow down the effect of the alcohol. But there is no magical coating that will keep the alcohol from getting into the bloodstream. Regardless of whether a person consumes eggs, bread, or milk, if he drinks too much alcohol, he will get drunk. Correct answer - d.

QUESTION: Terry Barton, editor-in-chief of Weekly Reader Publications, commenting on a survey taken by his magazine said, "A fundamental shift of attitudes has to take place to make drugs seem like a less necessary and glamorous part of growing up ... Knowledge is not the problem. Attitudes are the problem."

What percentage of fourth graders said children their own age encourage each other to try marijuana?

a) 25 percent
b) 20 percent
c) 15 percent
d) 10 percent

ANSWER: The survey showed that 25 percent of the fourth graders felt peer pressure to smoke marijuana. The figures rise about 8% with each grade level. By eighth grade, the preseure to use marijuana is up to 57 percent. Correct answer - a.

Thursday night, October 25, 1984

To those close in heart but far in miles --

I used to think I had gifts in organization until I came here. I don't seem to be able to keep track of when and what I have written people but since so long has gone by since our last letter I guess most anything will be new news even if it occurred a while ago.

Thanks to many, many prayers still being offered for us we are adjusting and our house on Montgomery Avenue is beginning to look and feel like home. However, if any of you feel led to move here we'd welcome you as neighbors!

Sturge has been making headway with his Shona language study. He completed the Ranch House College Course and then met an elementary school teacher who had sensed God calling her to teach Shona to Christian workers. Sturge is now studying with her and she has him write prayers, prepare Bible lessons, etc. All these things will help him as he tries to share Christ with the Chitungwiza believers.

We still have not been assigned a stand on which to build the church. However, Herbert did go out this week and sat and sat in the office of the planner until he got to speak with him. Chitungwiza is a highly politically motivated area and I believe they don't want churches pulling "their" people away. We have been blessed with two new men members which is an answer to specific prayers. Also the youth have organized a choir -- we even typed up song books for them. The Lutheran Church where we presently rent is going to tear down their building and build again so we will be worshipping outside soon. We may try to get a self-help handcraft program going where the women would do crochet work, embroidery, etc. and we would try to find outlets.

The evangelistic outreach that Sturge has felt called to has taken on a different format than he expected but--the Lord is bringing results. It has been more of a three-On-one ministry. One of the evangelistic "team" (it sounds official but it isn't) alerts Sturge to someone that they feel might be receptive to the gospel and then they invite the person to one of their homes and share how Christ has changed their lives. Two of the three men reached out to have accepted Christ. However, this is only the beginning because then we need to help them grow in Christ. The most recent person reached out to is a man named Malcolm who for years has walked the streets of Harare asking for money, etc. He smells, he has been in jail, he often sleeps in the church yard. However, one of the team felt led to tell him that she felt God had a better life prepared for him. She invited him to church and he came. We are now dealing with how to show him Christ's love. It is not good enough to leave him at the church door after worship and say, "Have a nice week." He needs a bath, food, fellowship -- he needs his eyes open to the beauty in life. I pray that City Church will be equal to the task of loving and accepting him!

Sturge and Garth have had an exciting bush experience. They went camping at Mana Pools on the Zambesi River. Thankfully they went with people who had been born there. There is no protection--you pitch your tents right where the animals wander about. They saw monkeys, honey badgers, hyena, cape buffalo, waterbuck, lions, hippos, crocodiles, etc. and -- they were chased by an elephant. They were on a car ride when they came up an embankment and accidentally frightened an elephant with her baby. She let out a bellow and with ears flapping charged the car. Garth had been on the roof but Sturge quickly pulled him in the window--he was as white as a sheet. The person driving had to go in reverse as fast as he could. It was like you see on T.V.

but--this was REAL LIFE.

I have had some insights into Shona culture. John's wife, Minicah--her eldest brother, David, died in August. His illness came on quickly and was diagnosed as cancer of the thyroid. He died shortly after. The burial was out at his home in Chekwakwa, one of the communal lands. Though we did not sleep there, Sturge or I went out each of the three days. Through this I got a glimpse into some of the long-standing beliefs in ancestral spirits. It was an uncomfortable time for me as I could feel the presence of evil. Of course some of the family were Christians so it was a real mixture of beliefs. Long before the Shona people knew Christ they would pray through their dead ancestors to reach God. They did not feel worthy to come before him directly. Even the Christians are highly influenced by their families in times of crisis to appease the ancestors. In a time of death the family often feels they are being punished by the spirit of another person who is against them. The people had a hard time believing that I believed a dead person could have no control over me. During these days I had my first experience with wailing--what a piercing sound. Many fell to the ground in exhaustion; many lost their voices. I watched them make a beautiful gown to wrap David's body in. It was all white and they cut intricate patterns in it.

Just recently I went to Chekwakwa for the presentation of mombe yeamai--presenting a cow to mother. Since there are not lawyers and legal documents in the tribal community everything is done by witnesses. When a woman marries her husband has to pay lobola. This usually consists of clothing for each parent (i.e. new suit, dress), one or more cows and money. The brides'sfamily sets the price. John had given his cow quite some time back. However, when David died it was decided to slaughter John's cow. Of course it would then have to be replaced. So--this week we went for the replacement cermony. First the calf had to be found--it was out wandering as is the practice. It is no easy task to find your cows. You walk and then have to herd them back. Once in the danga(corral-type area) the sister of Monicah's Mom came over to inspect the calf and be the witness. She poured water on the calf and stated that this calf now belonged to Monicah's Mom. When you are some place like Chekwakwa, time vanishes. Things are not done by clocks and schedules.

Sturge has also been to South Africa for a conference on Evangelism sponsored by Africa Enterprise. The feelings and experiences he had there could be a whole letter in itself. Sturge felt the pain of having to separate from a Malawain couple he had met because trains have separate compartments for blacks and whites. Sturge was willing to go in the third class section but was not allowed. After searching in Johannesburg he did find a restaurant that would allow them to eat together.

Within the congregation at City Church we are striving to be more of a multi-racial family. We have been having monthly fellowship dinners for 12-15 people so we can seek to know each other better. Stur-e has been amazed that most everyone he contacts is free to come, even if he calls only a few days before. In America choosing a suitable date for a group of people was hard.

We just recently had our first real contact with our Muslim neighbors. They came to bring us some meat from a feast they were celebrating commemotating Abraham's obedience in being willing to offer his son as a sacrifice. However, they believed the son was Ishmael rather than Issac (Genesis 23). They explained it was customary to give one-third of the meat to the poor, one-third to neighbors and one-third for self. We thanked them but to be honest we did not eat the meat.

Sturge asked what the meat was and they said either camel, buffalo or beef. The father--it is an extended family situation--is the foremost expert in Zimbabwe on the Koran.

We've been blessed by two U.S. visitors--Bob Myers, who led our Hebron Summer Youth Ministry the last two summers we were in Hebron. He was here with TEAM as a short-term missionary and he worked with youth in one of the African high density areas. Heidi Waite who grew up across the street from us was our other visitor. She is presently a travel agent in Boston so got here on a reduced fare. Also, John Poorman's wife,BBobby, is coming next week. We are eagerly counting down the days. She will combine business with pleasure and do quite a bit of touring developing United Methodist Churches here in Zim.

We certainly have not forgotten any of you. God has been with us here and we pray he is guiding your lives as well. Put us on your Christmas card list and be sure to add a note about how your lives are going.

With Love,

Joanne

Harare, Zimbabwe
Thanksgiving Day (US) 1984

Dear Friends in the Hebron Churches,

Thanksgiving Day is not quite the same when you're out of the country. Today, for example, is just another day here in Zimbabwe. Aaron and Garth have left for school (though under protest. They had some strange idea that I should give them this day off from school.) The weather is warm and sunny. The "white and drifted snow" is not in the picture. Nor is the traditional trip to grandmother's (Nana Dot's) house. Yet God has His ways of reminding us to be thankful even in a land that is not our own. For we have family here with us! Bobby is here, and we will all be celebrating this day with a traditional (as much as possible) Thanksgiving Dinner. John's family will be clebrating with us as well, though it will be their first exposure to our pilgrim fathers' style of feasting. They do have turkey here, but no cranberry sauce. The sweet potatoes are not quite the same and the stuffing may come out a little different. But it will be a real Thanksgiving Dinner and that's what counts. Actually it's the thanksgiving more than the dinner that counts most in God's sight, so I do want to say how thankful to God we all are that you have remembered us so faithfully in your prayers. Believe it or not we can feel their power as God responds to guide us along our way in Zimbabwe.

This day started out with Joanne getting up at 5:30 AM to peel apples for the apple pie. Not too long after that came a special holiday phone call from the U.S. It was Laurel Fronhofer! She gave us your greetings. So, through Laurel we have been able to speak with you on this day. Later this evening we will have the sad task of taking Bobby to the airport for her flight back to the U.S. Her three week's visit has come to an end. It was a very busy time as much of the visit was taken up with touring United Methodist mission work and developing Methodist churches. Fortunately Joanne was able to go along on all the tours with Bobby. Their trips took them into the hinterlands (bush) of the country. Needless to say the usual tourist spots were not on their itinerary. Garth and I even joined them for some of the visits in the Mutare region. As a result we were able to get to spend time with Bobby even though not much time was spent drinking tea on the veranda.

With Bobby here I have taken the last two weeks off as vacation time so I feel a bit out of touch with my work at City Church. But even when I am on leave I tend to preach somewhere on Sundays as there is such a shortage of preachers here in the country. In fact since I last preached at City Church I have preached in six different congregations. Some of them have been Shona speaking churches. I now need only the sermon to be interpretted; the rest of the service I can do in the language of the people. I still take classes once a week in the Shona language. I am paying for these classes with some oney that the Albany Presbytery gave me upon my departure. It was money from the Peacemaking Taskforce and I have felt that one of the best ways of making peace among the peoples is to learn each others language. Please continue to pray for my learning of this language.

MORE...

Garth and I had another breif experience with the "wilds" of Africa last week. While we were all in Mutare, Garth and I slipped away to drive through a small game park. We were in search of giraffe, which we had been assured were somewhere up there in the hills. Garth and I figured that giraffe wouldn't be too hard to spot, so in we drove. There were no good maps of the park to follow (and you know how I need maps) so we got kind of lost -- and still no giraffe. I decided to take a road that was less travelled, hoping that the giraffe had done the same. That road, however, came to a dead end at a large barbed wire fence reminiscent of the Nazi concentration camps. I realized that as we were in the extreme eastern part of Zimbabwe that we had come to the Mozambique border! I had earlier been telling the family about the armed guerillas who have been infiltrating into the country from Mozambique. Well fortunately there were no armed guerillas, but there were huge signs on the road to the right and left with skull and crossbones painted on them. The signs read (in Englinsh and Shona) "Danger -- Land Mines!" Garth and I amde a quick decsion. If there were giraffe there among the land mines we would let them be. We very carefully turned the car around AND HAEDED FOR THE GATE. God, however, must have wanted us to see one of these special creatures of His. On the way down Garth spied one munching away on the leaves of a tall tree. To add to the scene, a small herd of Zebra grazed peacefully beneath the stalks of his legs. They were no dummies! Giraffe, zebra and land mines don't mix. I just wonderif it was the English or the Shona that they had understood?!

Aaron missed out on that last trip because he had to stay home and take his exams. He has done very well in all his subjects and is at or near the top of his class in everything except Shona. The difficulty there is that he is in a class with those whose native language is Shona. Aaron admittedly yearns for the U.S. We all do from time to time. Please continue to be praying for us that we will be drawn closer as a family, especially when Aaron and Garth are not really where they want to be.

Joanne has done a terrific job arranging for everythin relating to Bobby's visit, as things have gone very smoothly even in spite of the predictable African sickness. God is also leading her into a real ministry of encouragemnt amongthe people both at City Church and Chitunwiza. Reports are coming in to me that Joanne's willingness to be "bloused" in identification with the others of the African Women's Associations has meant more to the black women than many sermons I could have preached. TheChitungwiza Church is growin increasing especially among the women and teenagers. As I write this, Herbert Chikomo isout there negotiating with the town engineer for a plot of land on which to build the church. As you know this has been a long time in coming. Today may be the day! Thanks be to God!

Thank you again for all your letters and tapes. We would seem much more isolated if we had not received them. We continue to pray each day for the Pastoral Nominating Committee. God will work through them to provide for you, His people. We love you!

In Christ's Service,

Sturge Toorman

EXTRA!! EXTRA!!

WINTER GREETINGS FROM THE POORMANS

Dec. 29, 1984

Dear loved ones in Hebron--

Well...it is almost 1985 and we have been here nearly one year. God has taught us ALOT of things and He has given us strength that we NEVER would have had on our own. For that we are grateful! But thankfully He has also continued to allow us to have deep feelings of love for all of you. And he has created us with the wonderful gift of memories. Christmas is over now and yet we continue to have Christ within us if we are believers and hopefully the Christmas season has brought us closer to Him and helped us to reaffirm our commitment to Him. For as Christ grew from a wee baby, to a boy to a Man, God wnats us to grow and go from milk to cereal to solid food. Our lives are an indication of whether this is happening. Sometimes we might not perceive this growth but the comments other Christians make should help us to see that we are becoming more Christlike. As I look back from far away I really appreciate the times when you in Hebron exhorted me and guided me back into the right road and also the times when you affirmed me and said, "You ar e different than you were" because Christ does not want us to stay the same. No matter how old we are, Christ still has things to teach us, branches to prune. People here do not know me as well as you all did and so it is harder for them to be a part of this pruning process but I know God will provide vinedressers for me as the weeks and years go on.

I wonder if this letter will arrive in time for the January Epistle. Life here has been hectic and I keep being pulled away from the typewriter. But we were well aware from the November/December Epistles what was going on in the churches and we participated in it even from here. We were excited that Revelation came to East Hebron and the Waites sent us their new tape. So we really shared in that! The Christmas Eve Service--we didn't have one here and we missed that. That was always a special service and I always wished that the church would be packed. To have the church dark and then to see how much light one candle can give off was always a meaningful reminder of how much each of us can do for Christ and how we need not be shy. Christ intends for us to be the light.

Thank you for your prayers as I coped with our first Christmas away from the U.S., family and close friends. I looked inside myself for quite awhile and felt sad but God worked through your prayers and as we began to prepare the choir music I could feel God working in me and showing me that Christmas is focusing on Him. Yes, I cried on Christmas day and the day after but they were missing you tears and they allowed room for the joy that we had experienced here. My favorite times were Christmas Eve when we ate together with John and Monicah and their family and opend gifts and sang. Rarely do we get together with John without singing. Then on Boxing Day 9the 26th) we had a worship service--our two families--at John's house. Both John and Sturge preached and it was special to me. Sitting all so close together, on the bed, on the floor, dressed in whatever we happened to have on--T-shirts, shorts, robes, etc. It was just so comfortable and helped me to really experience how the family can also be the church.

MORE..

We have been so overjoyed by all the cards that we have received from each of you11 and...almost every card has had a long, long note. What affirmation we have received regarding our letters in the Epistle. You are good for our egos. The elephant story was the top rated item.

Some exciting news at Chitungwiza--Simbarashe has come as youth director. He is maybe 19 or 20 years old and while he lived in Chitungwiza he had led the youth and the Sunday School. He had been living away and doing parttime jobs and playing soccer but he consented to come on staff with Sturge and Herbert and it is exciting. Though he works mostly with the youth he can also keep Sturge and Herbert up on the rest of the members. Some of the money that the West Hebron Sunday School sent is being used for his salary. I think he is getting $120 per month. It doesn't sound like much but he will be by far one of the highest paid people in his neighborhood. Having a steady job is not the norm in Chitungwiza. We plan to find him a bicycle to make his calls on. Also, we located a guitar (also paid for with WHSS money!) and that has really excited the youth. Already this week Simbarashe has learned to play two songs. During these school holidays he is meeting twice a week with the youth.

Some exciting news at City--Robin Burness who has been an integral part of the youth work has had to go to Kadoma. We thoght how can we ever get by without Robin? But God was at work and has already supplied a woman in her mid-twenties who wants to wrk with youth. She goes to a nearby Baptist Church but feels thay have so much committed leadership and feels she should come to work at City. Wow! Perfect timing. She is gifted in counseling.

We experienced quite unexpectedly while on our youth retreat some baptisms by immersion. When one of the woman came out of the water she became quite uncontrollable and almost tried to drown the pastor. The people knew exactly what to do--they took her from the water and held her down and began to pray and pray and sing. She was spirit possessed and the evil spirit was quite upset that she was giving her life over to Christ and the evil spirit was putting us a fight. It was very frightening for me at first but all the Africans in our group were calm--it was something they had all experienced before. The church leaders could not let the woman go free because the spirit within her might attack and hurt others who were there. My mind immediately went to stories I had read so often in the Bible about people with deomns and Jesus having the power to cast them out. I gather some of these people who are possessed do not even know it. Maybe their grandmother was a nyanga (witchdoctor) and had prayed for them to have these powers as well. The songs that the congregation would sing all dealt with the blood of Jesus and His power over Satan. After about 20 minutes the woman got calm--Christ was victorious. As I spoke to the African youth about the whole experience they had no doubt that the power of Jesus Christ would win out over the devil. That is waht the scriptures say and that is what they have seen happen. Sometimes the people who are possessed are prayed for all night but the victory does come. I was thankful to have participated in this experience. We were also told that some Africans can be baptised and the evil spirits will not be threatened--if the church the people are joining is a lukewarm church, if it does not preach Christ crucified and the power of the blood of the lamb than Satan does not get upset. A friend of Sandy VanDyk's who ate with us one evening told of a [illegible] who worships regularly--the worship does not challenge Satan--

A friend of Sandy VanDyk's who ate with us one evening told of a nyangad who worships regularly--the worship does not challenge Satan--there is no need of a battle. In Africa, or at least among Africans, they have no doubt that there is a daily battle going on between good and evil/God and Satan. Most families are affected by all of this and have personal experiences that they can relate. It is a real challenge to the mainline churches to preach a message that will get Satan upset and have him show himself on the battle ground for once he raises hsi head and begins to fight then Christ can fight and win the battle.

As we begin to enter into 1985 I can see Sturge and I getting to know people a little better. One church member even dropped by to wish us a blessed Christmas and one of the young men who heads up the Boys Brigade came by and since it was supper time he ate with us and stayed talking with us until 11 PM. That brought back fond memories of Hebron!

God has been blessing us with rain. As a matter of fact, Sturge tried for days to cut the lawn and it would rain again. What a blessing the green all around us is. More rain is still needed but people are encouraged. We are thankful for your prayers for rain.

Sturge palns to take off 2 weeks in beginning of January. We don't have plans to go anywhere. The boys want to play golf. I bet they will play tennis too and Sturge and Aaron will go against each other in basketball--Sturge says he can sure feel that he is older that when he used to take on Sam and Steve. I'd like to go out to dinner so I am hoping we can sneak that in.

Words can't express the joy that we have received from all of your letters and cards--I'd like Christmas to go on all year. I'll just keep the cards by my chair and read one over each day. Your love for us is making it over all the miles.

Love in Christ,

Joanne

December 28, 1984

Dear loved ones--

I have felt very frustrated that there has been no time to write letters. Every time I sit down to write something comes up--the interruption is always special but I still feel torn as I don't want to fall behind on my communication with all of you because I miss you all so much and think of each of you in so many different ways. What a wonderful gift for God our memories are! For instance last evening when we were about to eat supper--I had just come dashing in from choir--Alex dropped by. He is in his twenties and goes to City Church, heads up the Boys Brigade, etc. He is single and in a sense lonely. By nature he is a loner and he realizes he needs to be with people. We gave him a plate and....at about 11 p.m. he went on back home. We grew to know him so very much better and that was a real blessing but as you all know, time can only be used once. Having people drop in is very rare here and we told him how much we liked the fact that he felt free to come and join us--how that brought back wonderful memories of Hebron and the open door there.

Okay Joanne, get to the point--Christmas. I basically want to share with you all about our first Christmas in Zim. There were wonderful almost mountain top moments and there were deep valleys but Jesus was with us through it all and even as I look back now we have grown and learned alot. Satan was at work in the whole Christmas season or experience but God won out as He promises in His Word that He will. Let me start at the very beginning.

After Bobby left and looking forward to Christmas I had been very depressed--probably the lowest I had been since coming here. My thoughts turned very inward to Me, Me, ME. Thankfully God answered the prayers you all prayed for me and as our choir began practicing for Christmas I felt my spirit being lifted and I started again looking outward rather then inward.

Christmas shopping was different as there are very few items here that can not be surpassed in America. Thus, as you all know, gifts really weren't sent home and we bought Aaron and Garth each a pair of slacks and some books from Scripture Union. All the parcels that were received from America were very welcome and much appreciated! And there were alot of gifts under our tree because we celebrated with John's family and so there were maybe 15 of us in all. We had thought about buying gifts for children in an orphanage in Highfields but realized that was too ambitious financially so we decided to buy practical gifts for Monicah's brothers family who live in the tribal trust land. Monicah's brother David had died this past August and his wife and four young children are now the responsibility of the rest of the family. The drought has meant that they have had a difficult time feeding themselves or having extra crops to sell and make a little bit of cash. They recognized that it was not us who was helping them but God and we prayed together before we left them the day we delivered the gifts. Being able to give is such a gift in itself.

Different than in Hebron, Christmas Day Services are the big thing here. Sturge preached at City but we also wanted to participate in worship at Chitungwiza so we drove out there after City--got their late but....Herbert was preaching so we just joined the congregation. Knowing that we would be busy Christmas Day we decided to celebrate on Christmas Eve with John and his family. We had a sit down meal and the table looked just like it would have in New York with our dark blue tablecloth, blue clover dishes, etc. Sometimes it is strange--things can be so the same and yet so different all at one time.

John and I both worked all day on the meal. We had a roast rather than turkey. Here in Zim people decorate for Christmas as we might decorate for a birthday party. Crepe paper streamers, ballons, crackers with little novelty gifts inside, etc. I had wanted Paul and Susan to feel it was Christmas so we combined those things with our decorations. I made crackers out of toilet paper rolls and bought little items to go inside. For instance Susan got nail polish and thread. Then in the empty spaces I packed sweets--hard candy. These were the table favors. We opened them one at a time from oldest to youngest before eating. People enjoyed them more than I had thought. Sturge read the Christmas story and prayed before we served the meal. What a blessing it is that John and his family are Christians because when we fail Christ comes in and gets us back together.

I gather the white Zimbabweans follow a English format for Christmas. Plum pudding with hard sauce, trifle, shortbread, etc. Plum pudding reminded me of my early years--I never liked the pudding but loved the hard sauce and kept coming back for seconds and thirds.

After dinner we gathered in our living room and sang some Christmas songs in Shona. I always love to sing. Then we began the gift opening. We chose a gift from random and we all watched while the person opened it. In the Shona custom gift giving is a great ceremony. People clap and shout--often they don't open their own gifts but have someone else open them for them. It was a time of great excitement and very noisy. It was fun! Gift giving went on for a long time with 15 plus people involved and by the time we were finished we were ready for cake, trifle, cookies, etc. And then came the dishes--but many hands make light work. When we went to bed we were all feeling very much one family.

We all woke early and were off to our churches. Sturge preached a hard hitting sermon at City--he was not subtle. If people missed the point--well...He challenged us to be different from other churches--to avoid being a homogenuous group. To receive the lowly into our congregations. This won't be easy. If someone who sits beside us smells because he lives on the streets--don't move away, ask him home to our house for a shower. Provide for the simple needs of the lowly around us who are coming into our church body. God wants a congregation mixed so that those with more resources can share those resources with others who have less. Take time to talk to the lowly person, especially about Jesus. When the shepherds came to the stable, they saw Jesus but they also talked to Mary and Joseph and told them about what the angels had said, etc. The issue is not being kind to the poor--the issue is being faithful to Jesus and what he asks us to do. Those who receive the poor and the lowly are those who receive Jesus Christ. God has chosen the poor and the lowly and He has made them more fortunate than us.

At Chitungwiza I started feeling sad. For some reason there were not many there and those who were there looked sad and poor. We got there half way through the service and the youth choir got there after us and so Herbert would not let them sing an anthem. It made me realize as the church was cracked, bare, etc. that the stable Jesus was born in was cracked, bare, dirty, smelly, noisy, etc. Not the kind of place we would chose for our daughter to have a baby. Sturge did present the congregation with some gifts--gifts that have come from people in the U.S. sharing--he presented a guitar to the youth choir from the West Hebron Sunday School. The way we found the guitar is a miracle story in itself. Really it was Malcolm, the street begger who has been coming to city who found it for us. Then Sturge gave people New Testaments which a woman at Ardmore Church had provided through the American Bible Society--they are in Shona. But I could feel I was slipping.

We came home and Jackie and Terence were with us for the day. They are both from City Church. The house seemed so empty, there were no familiar smells, no family, John's family was gone. I wanted to escape by sleeping but something in me resisted sleeeping on Christmas Day. John and Monicah came home soon but they were tired and John said he wanted to sleep and with that Satan began to work--I started feeling not one family with John's family, they started feeling we didn't want them because Jackie and Terence were here, etc. It is harder for John's family when we have other Africans over. Plus I gather they had received a card from an African--no name--that said you think you have it good now but what are you going to do when those Americans leave, then you will be just like all of us. Comments came back to me that whites had made about how you just "can't be good friends with your domestic", etc. I won't go into it all but one thing piled up on another and by Wednesday I could sense a gulf between us and John's family. At first I thought it was my loneliness, etc. but then Susan (John's daughter) and I got in a long conversation and I realized that their family was feeling a huge gulf too. And so we gathered together and took it to the Lord in prayer, song and worship and we asked God to kick Satan out of our midst. It is sad but very true--many people (African and white) would be happy if John and our family relationship broke down and we were reduced to master/servant. The worship service we had together in John and Monicah's house--in English and Shona--with both Sturge and John preaching and with all of us singing and dancing and Aaron on the rattle was the best part of Christmas. And I realize that it can't be our human feelings, etc. it has to be God that continues to keep us together as one family in Him. All of this took a lot out of me.

Thankfully all was resolved because yesterday we underwent a family medical crisis. Sturge took John to the Clinic to donate blood--there are many accidents here at Christmas time and there was an appeal out for blood. Sturge had donated and John said that he would like too--I guess he had done so in his younger days. When they took his blood pressure it was 190/120 and needless to say they did not take any blood but told Sturge we needed to take John to a doctor. Our doctor said he would see him right away. He has gone for blood and urine tests and is on medication. We are thankful that he desired to give blood because this way we were able to find out that he needed help.

We received phone calls from both our families and from Cathy and from Julie. That was great! I tend to like to just listen to Sturge talk because again I get filled with varying emotions. And yet I know that God provides for us because He has provided for me. And when we return to the U.S. we will be able to appreciate even more fully each time we get to be with family and friends.

The cards keep coming in and what a blessing they are. When we take them down from the mantle and door I will read them all again.

The boys never like me talking about how they feel and yet I know you all get bored hearing I, I, I. However, I think Christmas turned out better than they expected--they throughly enjoyed Christmas Eve. Christmas Day seemed more like a Sunday to them. It will be interesting to hear what they say about all of this as they look back on it.

Sturge seems to grow well where he is planted. He loves everyone deeply and misses everyone deeply but somehow he has the assurance that the relationships will still be there and that love can flow over all the miles that separate us. He talks about home and family and friends very often and yet he has a peace about him.

I'd better close. We love you all and we are eager to hear all the details of your Christmases. May this year bring you into an even deeper relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ and may you be more and more able to share with others how Christ has worked in your personal life.

Ndinokuda!
(I love you)
Joanne

LETTER FROM THE POORMANS

Dear Friends,

Summer is here. The grass is green. The rains are falling. Our second year in Zimbabwe has begun. The new school year started for Aaron and Garth this past week. Garth is now in grade 7 (the last year of primary school) and Aaron is in Form 2 (the second year of secondary school). From my point of view as a parent the beginning of the second school year in Zimbabwe was sure a lot easier than the beginning of the first year. Both Aaron and Garth "know the ropes" of their respective schools now so things have gone smoothly this week. I am just recently back to work after two weeks leave time. We didn't go anywhere exotic during that time. I did get to work around the year, mowing the fast growing law twice weekly with my trust $200 1957 reconditioned power mower. Actually it's not so trusty and broke down quite often--but then what do you expect for only $200? I also got to play golf with Aaron and Garth. It was the first time ever that the three of us had played on a real course. Aaron did very well--so did Garth considering that there are no left handed clubs for rent in all of Zimbabwe. Garth had to quickly learn to become ambidexterous. We played all afternoon and only lost one golf ball. I'd like to say it was when I hit it into the lake and a crocodile ate it. Actually it was devoured by a mowing machine whose operator was angry with one of my drives which barely missed his head. So much for vacationing in the heart of Africa...

As the year begins I am very excited with the emergence of two young Shona men who have come forward in positions of leadership in both City Church and in Chitungwiza. I am currently working with them in a discipling relationship. Simbarashe has been hired (with money received from the W.H. Sunday School and others) to work with the youth in Chitungwiza. He already has two active youth groups going numbering together about 42 young people. He's organized Sunday Schools in both our Seke and St. Mary's churches (localities in the township of Chitungwiza. He also does youth evangelism work and councils with the young people. I meet with him every Thursday. It's really a joy to talk with him, give him advice, search the scriptures together, teach him, and learn from him. This work of the Lord Jesus, which began with money form the U.S. is really bearing fruit! Please pray for Simbarashe. He'll be under increasing pressure as he becomes a very visible leader in this high-density area. There are many who would like to see him fall.

The other young man I am working with is Michael. He appeared "out of the blue" one Sunday and said he would like to help us with our evangelistic work at the City Church. With a name like his I shouldn't have questioned why he had just suddenly appeared, but I did anyway. It turned out that he was fresh out of a Bible College which had an Assemblies of God affiliation. He had difficulties with some of their doctrinal stances and felt led to do the Lord's work within the Presbyterian Church. (He had attended a Presbyterian Church in another part of the country some time ago). The best part of his coming to us is that he has gifts in evangelism which are so sorely needed in our body. We can say what we like about the Pentecostals--but they do produce good evangelists! Though we

don't have any money to pay him yet for his services, Michael has started right into the Lord's work in evangelism outreach to the nearby apartment dwellers. This past week four of the people with whom he shared Christ received Christ into their lives! I went with him for some follow-up and encouragement to these new Christians and it was really great to see the joy which Christ had brought to these people--who turned out to be the domestic servants of the apartment dwellers. One of these workers was employed by a Hindu woman. Michael (braver than I) asked if we could share Christ with her as well. The Hindu woman rather sceptically agreed to hear what we had to say. We spent over an hour with her. It did not seem that we got very far. There were just too many things about God she could not accept. From taling with her I did learn, however, that people of other faiths are probably judging Christianity by what Christians do rather then by what Christians say they believe. Our words made little or no impace on her. What did was that Michael had been willing to come as a complete stranger to talk to her servant and that we had been willing to spend an hour with her in her home. That encounter showed me how much I have to learn about witnessing to Hindus. Please prav for Michal also that he will continue to be bold in reaching out with thelove of Christ. Also that we will be able to find the resourses to help him with his living expenses.

Well, enough from me...for a change of pace we will close this letter with a word from Garth.

Love,

Sturge

Hello from the ever rainy country of Zimbabwe. Yes, our prayers have been answered; there has been rain for about the last month. But still the dams aren't full, so a word of advise--Keep Praying! Well, we had a good New Year's Eve dav celebration with John and Monicah's family. We had a ping-pong tournament and a badminton tournament, a barbeque, and hymn sing, and a skit. Dad won the badminton and ping pong tournaments. Aaron came in second in both. I came in third. We all had a good time. We stayed up to about 1:00 a.m. We were woken up by some of our friends singing "Morning Has Broken." We video taped some of the celebrations as we had the use of a video machine from one of our best friends in Zimbabwe. They are American also. They come from Austin, Texas. They came to Zimbabwe with their friend Doug in August with a Christian group called Navigators. We go over there for dinner and to watch videos. They are very nice. Well, I'll sign off. We miss you all. Hope you find a minister.

Your Brother in Christ,

Garth Poorman

FOORMAN LETTER Feb. 18, 1985

Dear loved ones in the Hebron churches--

The highlight of our mail this past month was a tape from the West Hebron Sunday School. It was a super idea and we loved every minute of listening pleasure! What I noticed was how much older all the kids voices sounded. More time has past then I realized. The sounds were so familiar and it was super to hear the kids singing. We want to go to a Y.P. meeting in St. Mary's (Chitungwiza) and then we will make another tape to send back to the Sunday School. Tapes are really a neat way to communicate--if you shut your eyes you really can almost think that you are across the table from the person.

Ministry in Chitungwiza has been a little difficult this past month. Political rallies are much more frequent as the elections are coming soon--however, we did read in Saturday's paper that they may be pushed off from March till June. I wasn't excited about that because that means that this being unsettled will continue for longer.

On February 10th there was a big rally in St. Mary's--on the field right beside the Lutheran Church where we worship. The rally was in the morning and some of the Lutheran members had gathered to worship. The Zanu youth came into the church and told them that their service was over. They told the minister to take off his robe. They locked up the church and had everyone come to the rally. I guess earlier in the morning they had gone through Chitungwiza telling people that there would be no church today--everyone was to come to the rally. Because of this our Chitungwiza women were very nervous about Sturge coming out to preach yesterday, Sunday the 17th. When we were in Chitungwiza Thursday they told Sturge <u>not</u> to come but that they would worship. Sturge and I felt it was in a sense a cop out for us not to come and be with them but...when Herbert went on long leave the arrangement was that the women in the W.A., not Sturge, would decide whether it was safe for him to come and preach so...Sturge submitted to the authority and he had yesterday afternoon off. We will have to take one day at a time.

I gather that other things go on as well to intimidate people--if you walk through Chitungwiza late at night the Zanu youth might stop you and ask you to show your party card--if you don't have one they might give you a hard time. So...things are not as peaceful as they look on Thursday mornings when Sturge and I drive out there.

People say they think the rains are over for this year. This past week we have started to have bright sunny days and blue, blue sky. I must admit, the sunshine lifts my spirits. The wonderful news is that the heavy, long rains this season did fill the dams and all of them are spilling andso the drought seems to be over. What as answer to prayer this is for Zimbabwe! Of course, it will take a few good years of crops to get people stable again but we are really thankful. For recreation people drive out and watch the water running over the dams--something they haven't seen since

MORE...

1980. I know there are other countries in Africa who have not been so blessed. I pray that the political leaders will realize that it is God who has given them the rain. I know at one point when someone had asked Prime Minister Mugabewhat he was going to do about the drought he had said, "I have asked the churches to pray"--whether he was serious or being sarcastic I don't know, but the churches did pray and God answered with power.

This month we have added another body to the City Church--the Shona service that has been held at 3 PM in the City Church sanctuary used to be under the Mbare Church and Jonah Masaka. With Sturge and Herbert both on board and with the service right in our own building we asked Jonah if we could take over responsibility for these Christians. The leader (head elder) of that service was Fides, the City Church caretaker and so he sees Sturge and Herbert each day and thus communication would be easy and natural.. The group was small--maybe 10 to 15 men. Men, you say? Well--basically this worshipping body is Malawian men who were brought up in the C.C.A.P. Church and when they came to Zimbabwe to live they wanted to continue to be Presbyterians. Quite a bit of their service is done in a Malawian language. This is going to cause some "problems" as the people that Sturge and Michael go to visit in the flats and who express an interest in worship are Shona speakers. Sturge and Herbert will need to be gentle in helping the Malawians see the need to change over to Shona if they desire their body to grow.

An exciting thing for us is that John and his family are now involved in the City Church. John had decided when his blood pressure got so high that he should worship and be inolved in a church closer to where he lives. Often in the past he had helped Fides with things at City Church so this was a natural choice. He will be a strong leader. Also, when Sturge speaks to people in Vestry hours he now gives them a slip of paper which tells the times of the services at City. Yesterday seven or eight men came to the 3 PM Shona service. Their coming means work as they do not have a church background--but John already announced that he would begin an Adult Sunday School class next Sunday where he can share the basics of the faith.

I have spent alot of time this last month or so with people--Megan who helps with the City Y.P. suddenly was in the hospital when a disc in her back slipped out. Just the day before she had signed the lease for an apartment and they had said she had to move right in for security reasons. So...there was a lot to do there. Also, John's daughter Gift has been very ill and the doctor sedated her so heavily that for a while she could not take care of her kids--I even had Ragani tied to my back with a towel one afternoon--he fell promptly to sleep so I was pleased. So... my house and my clothes have been much more wrinkled and hand-printed (as a matter of fact Wendy and Rangani are here with me as I type--it brings back special memories of Carl and Amanda!)

Garth has been elected house captain for Mercury. He has to get the kids in shape for various inter-school competitions. They have a big sports day coming up in March. Aaron is still into basketball.

MORE...

His under 15 team has been winning. The other day he got hit in the eye with the basketball and his contact popped out. Thankfully it was still on his face and he was able to leave the game and come home and put it in the fluid so it wouldn't get irreversibly hard. His team was way ahead so they let him leave the game. Sturge continues to play on the church soccer team (called football here)--he and John are by far the oldest players.

You all continue to be in our prayers. We know God is working through the PNC to bring you the right pastor---continue to encourage them and pray for them. Share with them the leadings you receive from you daily walk with the Lord. Believe me, we could not have made the move to Zim or been sustained here without your love and prayers---PRAYER DOES HAVE POWERFUL EFFECT!

Lots of love!

Joanne

THE PERFECT CHURCH

If you should find the perfect church without one fault or amear,
For goodness sake, don't join that church, You'd spoil the atmosphere.
If you should find the perfect church, where all anxieties cease,
Then pass it by lest joining it you mar the masterpiece.
If you should find the perfect church, then don't you ever dare
To tread upon such Holy Ground -- you'd be a misfit there.
But since no perfect church exists, made of imperfect men,
Then let's cease looking for the church, and love the church we're in.
Of course, it's not the perfect church, that's simple to discern
But you and I and all of us could cause the tide to turn.
What fools we are to flee our post in that unfruitful search.
To find at last where problems look, God proudly builds His church.
So let's keep working in our church until the resurrection
And then we'll join that church without an imperfection.

-Mavis Williams

LETTER FROM THE POORMANS

Dear Friends in the Hebron Churches,

Many of you may be wondering why you have not heard much from us recently. Actually it is because our routine of life has changed a bit over the past month or so. There have been some problems in John's family with which we have gotten involved. Also, John has been sick with a bad case of bronchitis for the past two weeks. As a result, Joanne is having to experience Zimbabwe life without a helper! Oh I do some little things, but the heavy load of keeping up the house without vacuum or washing machine has fallen upon Joanne. These daily tasks are certainly not impossible by any means, but they are quite time consuming. Aaron, Garth and I are beginning to realize how much we have really depended upon John for all the daily chores. Joanne has always realized this. As the boys and I pitch in now while he's sick we would hope to continue when he's well so that some of his burden can be eased.

My work over the past months has also had to be done without Herbert Chikomo by my side. Herbert has been on "long leave" and will not return to work until April 1. Again, the work has not been impossible, but I will be glad when Herbert gets back and we can be a team again. In February, Alan Maker (now the Moderator of General Assembly) had asked me to organize a Rally for all the Presbyterians living in the Harare area. He was coming to be the speaker and wanted to give encouragement to all us Presbyterians. The Rally turned out very well as we nearly filled the big City Church on a Thursday evening. We sang choruses in English and in Shona. Choirs from the different churches sang. We even had one of our members play some hymns on the West Indian steel drums. I was particularly pleased that there were as many black people there as white. And nearly all the blacks had had to come by bus. There were even 52 people from our Chitungwiza Church! I realize from the comments after the rally that the people really do like to come together for occasions like these. The black Christians particularly want to do more of that type of thing. You see, the sad fact is that still most of the worship services among Presbyterians here in Harare are done in churches that are nearly all white or all black. Rallies like these can be used by the Lord to help break down the barriers that separate us.

Comments were not as favorable about another "event" which the Lord let me into. I had been praying hard for the City Church one Friday while preparing my sermon in the privacy of my vestry. I had been praying that God would provide me with a message that the people would really need to hear. Right then a man walked into the vestry and introduced himself as a Presbyterian minister from Ghana. He said he had a message from the Lord which he would like to offer to the people on Sunday, with my permission. After talking with him for some time I felt led to offer him the pulpit on Sunday. I knew God was leading me, but later I felt a little uneasy. That Sunday was to be Women's Association Sunday and I didn't want anything to go wrong. I even took one of our elders (also a Ghanian) to visit him on Saturday, just to be sure this preacher was legitimate. My elder said we should go ahead with the plan to have him preach and so I committed it to Christ and on we went with the service. When

the time came for the sermon, I introduced our guest minister and he began to preach a message on love, forgiveness and the necessity to be close to Christ through the Scriptures. The only trouble was that no one could understand him! He was shouting and speaking quite rapidly with his Ghanian accent! In between his points he would pound the Bible for emphasis. That was okay except that I was holding the Bible! (His eyes weren't too sharp so he had asked me to read for him) At this point I was tempted to intervene but quickly realized what a great sense of humor God had. The white people in the congregation didn't think it was too funny though. They were very uncomfortable -- some even got up and left. The blacks in the congregation, more familiar with the style of black African evangelists, were attentive with a trace of a smile on their faces, wondering whether one of the thumps might miss the Bible and catch their pastor across the head. When the service was over there was more conversation than ever about the day's worship and sermon. Some, most of it was rather negative and I was afraid we'd have to get ready to "pack our bags" as George Callaway would always say. Yet I received no real complaints. The message had been Scriptural. No one could deny that. It had just been lost through his style, and accent and shouting and thumping. I'm still not sure what God was doing in all that, but I know He was doing something. If nothing else, God showed the people, and me, that He is certainly not boring! A postscript -- the next Friday I was again sitting in my vestry preparing my sermon. Another black minister walked in, this time from Nigeria. He wanted to introduce himself and worship with us on Sunday. I welcomed him and invited him to play for our soccer team. He turned out to be a great left fullback! God does have a sense of humor.

I do ask for your prayers in regard to the vision God has given me for the church in Harare. Christians here of different races are not really One. They worship together and work together during the week. But they really don't care to be with one another, to understand one another and to open themselves to one another. Most Christians seem to view this as a minor problem in the whole scheme of things. I am convinced it is the major problem holding back the witness of Christ to the nation of Zimbabwe. Who are we to preach love and reconciliation to a torn nation when we have little or no real communication with our brothers and sisters of a different race? I ask you to pray that I will not back down in proclaiming Christ's call to His people to become one, in the face of a body of believers who are not convinced that there really is any problem to begin with.

We're all looking forward to the school holiday April 13 - May 7. We really miss, though, sharing the joy of the Easter season with you, our brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters. We thank you for all your prayers and we pray constantly for God to bring to you, the Hebron Churches, the pastor that He would have for His people.

In Christ's Service

Sturge

EXCERPTS FROM JOANNE

The following are excerpts from a letter to Vernon Chew from Joanne Poorman.

"Your prayers have been answered in wonderful ways. We did get gorgeous rains. The dams are full and many of them are spilling Lawns are green. Water rationing is over so we can now flush the toilet after each use (a real blessing!) and take a deep bath and rinse our clothes well, etc. People have seen this as a real answer to prayer and churches have had special days of thanksgiving for the rain. So we are very grateful for your prayers and it just lets us realize again that prayer does work. God does hear and answer our prayers. I know sometimes the answers are different from what we want but this time His will and our desire were the same. I think it rained every day in January.

Just this week we celebrated two Zim holidays -- Independence Day on the 17th and Armed Forces Day on the 18th. They had big celebrations all over the country. I had kind of wanted to go to the one at Rufare Stadium and I had thought it might be a good experience for the kids but everyone was hesitant to go. It is a real mob scene and sometimes people do get hurt. A lot of drinking goes on and many memories of the war are recalled and that evokes all sorts of emotions. We did not go but we did watch on TV.

However we did go the parade the following day of military hardware and industrial things. It was a gorgeous day and all the things displayed looked in tip top condition. All sorts of emotions were evoked in me--I could feel how proud the people were of theri army, guns, etc. and how proud and happy they were that they had won but also I could feel inside me the real fear of war. Those tanks that were peaceably coming down the street had been in the war--people had been killed, people had been frightened, etc. And when they shot off some fireworks which I wasn't expecting I found myself crying--it just sounded too much like a war. The shots were these parachutes which came floating down and looked very pretty. This is year #5 of independence and I guess everythin was bigger and better then in years before. The industrial floats were not what we would call floats but just the trucks or vans or whatever that company would use in their weekly works. Of course they had all been cleaned and polished for the parade. A few of the companies threw out souvenirs to the crowd. It did bring back memories of the good old Salem 4th of July parade.

Right near us they are building a huge Sheraton Hotel with a large conference center. It hopes to be open in October 1985. It is quite fancy on the outside--all the windows are gold guilded. It is going to be quite modern. I think they should let us all tour it before clients start coming in as we have watched it being built. Garth thinks it is going to have an outside elevator. Also the North Koreans are very involved in building a sports stadium near to us. Zim does want to increase its tourist trade--I am not sure what the big attractions will be. They do have wild animals but I think Kenya has bigger and better game parks and safaris. Victoria Falls I guess is really gorgeous.. All the other attractions are very underdeveloped compared to some place like the U.S. It is interesting to be out in the communal lands but I think you really have to know somebody. I am still very thankful foa all I saw of Zim when I traveled with Boby to see the United Methodist work. I

JOANNE"S LETTER CON'T.

The boys are on holiday from school right now. The weather is beginning to turn cool at nights. As I type Sturge and Garth are both working on the lawn. I love the blue, blue skys and the fluffy white clouds.

Jhon who works for us and is a special friend is away in Zambia and Malawi. I have really missed him! He had been quite sick with mono and bronchitis but decided to go anyway on his trip because his brother had died and he wanted to check on his children. He had also not seen his sister for many, many years. We have been praying hard that his journey will be a safe one and that he and his wife, Monicah will stay healthy and return to us healthy. I have been working hard as we have no washing machine or vacuum cleaner or other appliances. I think I might have lost a little weight but that is always good in my view. African women don't want to be real thin--they feel that is a sign that their husband is not providing well for them--not giving them the food they need, etc. We lent John Garth's disc camera and we are hoping we will be able to get a glimpse of those countries through his photos.

I so often think of my Dad and things that I would like to share with him. I see things that would make him laugh, etc. I wonder if he would like sadza the staple of the Shona people--but he likes most things as you will recall. I am glad for the years he got to spend near to us.

Again--thanks for holding us up on your prayers."

Joanne

To hug is to risk appearing the fool.
To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.
To reach out for another is to risk involvement.
To expose feelings is to risk exposing one's true self.
To place your ideas, your dreams before the crowd is to risk loss.
To love is to risk not being loved in return.
To live is to risk dying.
To hope is to risk despair.
To try at all is to risk failure.
But to risk, we must, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.
The man, the woman who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing and is nothing!

LETTER FROM JOANNE POORMAN

Friday, May 10, 1985

Dear Loved Ones In Hebron--

I want to begin by apologizing for not getting a letter off in time for the last Epistle deadline. It was not that we were not thinking of you--in a sense we were with you in thought and prayer even more than usual if that is possible but my tiredness at the end of the day from John being away and the thoughts that weren't resolved made a letter hard. Things have now slowed down some--John is back at work and the boys have returned to school. I'm tucked into bed trying to fight off a cold--Sturge too is feeling heavy-headed.

John and Monicah's trip to Malawi and Zambia was difficult but they returned home safely. Zambia, I gather, has a rich and a poor "class" with not much inbetween. Prices are expensive--bread $1.20; a small chicken $10. No margarine, floor polish, etc. There is a lot of thieving and armed robbery. They were able to locate John's brother's children and they left most of their clothes and their blanket with them. It is very common for people to travel with a blanket--buses, etc. are often unreliable and they are never sure where they might have to sleep. Also, when they stay with family there just might not be extra blankets.

A major problem for John was unintentionally caused by us. In case of emergency we had written our address and phone number in his passport. When he got to the Malawi border his passport was canceled as it was "not to be altered in any way." They wanted him to return to Zim. After much discussion they allowed him to go to Blantyre and apply for a new passport--costly and time-consuming. While boarding a bus he had his cash pick-pocketed; his remaining travelers check was in another pocket. The amazing thing to me was that he only had $200 to begin with and even with one-third of it used unexpectedly or stolen they still made it. I need to have them teach me budgeting! Malawi is a pretty country and has wonderful crops but there is not much money. People mostly make their living from the land. Sugar cane, bananas, sweet potatos, nuts are abundant. John and Monicah traveled by but--it didn't look as comfortable as a Salem School bus. Luggage tied to the roof--no Tarpolin. From the bus stop to John's family land was about a 12 mile walk--part in the dark over roads he hadn't traveled in 15 years and Monicah had never traveled. Not a luxury vacation but they are thankful they "got home."

Sturge and I were the parents for seven kids while John and Monicah were gone. I spent most of the holiday in the house washing, sweeping, cooking and caring. Gift and Susan were a great help but with that many people as soon as we'd turn around.....mess again! I'd wake in the morning to Rangani (age 1½ years) wanting to climb in bed with me. Gift weaned him while John and Monicah were gone which meant he needed extra loving care from others. Baba Sturge is a special favorite!

We had some new wild animal adventures. We went to Lake McIlwaine and the grass was so...high we weren't real hopeful of seeing much. But--off in a sandy spot we saw what looked like four boulders--they were four white rhinos. As we stopped the car the lead stood and stared at us. I think he wanted us to know he was

boss. We knew friends who had been chased in their car by rhinos so we were cautious. Then we saw a girafee--are they ever tall. He came within 10 feet of our car. I couldn't help but think what a dent it would make in the car if he kicked. And then...we were surrounded by ostrich. Again it was as if they were saying, we know you are here...stay in your car. Their legs are so long and as they walked around the car they puffed out their feathers almost like those carwash brushes. The leader stared through the front wind-shield and a hard peck would have cracked the wind-screen (as they say here). After the warning, they walked off and went back to eating.

Sturge has been encouraged by the number of young people in the Chitungwiza Communicants Class. Most of them are men which he feels as an encouragement for the future. For Simbarashe the work with the guys has been more fruitful for in the Shona culture it does not look good for a guy to be seen alone with a girl so he doesn't have the freedom to visit them in their homes, etc. The guys meet regularly for Bible Study and they can now find most of the answers to their questions for themselves in the Word. Simbarashe is going to have to find another place to live. Presently he lives with his family. His bedroom is really their kitchen and now that winter is coming they'll want to cook inside. The problem is that when he rents a room from another family they might not let the youth gather there to sing and pray. The thought came to me that maybe with some of the money for Chitungwiza we should rent a whole house--either two or four rooms (maximum $50 per month)--Simbarashe and Michael could live together and they would be free to have people come there to worship and study.

Sturge is going to be part of an Evangelism Outreach into the high density location of Mbare. It begins May 20th and will last that entire week. During the day they will go out into homes by twos. Then at night there will be Rallies at the church. Sturge will live with a Shona speaking family with the hope that he will have to use and increase his Shone speaking ability.

At City Church the congregation has now been divided amont the elders. Elders are being encouraged to visit in the homes--not just leave the communion card and run, to invite the people to their homes, learn names of the children in the families, etc. Sturge and Herbert have then divided the elders between themselves. Sturge felt God especially rewarded him through his visit with Ann Philips--he talked with her about the gifts she felt the Holy Spirit had given her. As she spoke of her gifts in administration, not minding asking people to do things, etc., she realized that she was probably the one to take on the Chairmanship of the Stewardship '85 Program. This was a need the church had been praying about.

Sturge has been elected as one of the delegates to Synod which will be held in Pretoria, South Africa in September.

I had better close. As always there is more I could say but this is getting long. It is our prayer that as the PNC finds a candidate who they think is "just for Hebron" that that person will be drawn to you all as well. Though Sturge and I were immature in our faith back when we were called, and though we did not spend the time in concentrated prayer that we would now, God did let us know that H wanted us in Hebron, not in Wisconsin where we also interviewed and were offered a job.

May God bless each of you as you seek His will and study His Word--How He does change us as we pray and study!! Love, Joanne

May 12, 1985

Dear Loved Ones,

There are benefits to everything, even a bad sore throat since it keeps me in bed and gives me a chance to get caught up on communication with those in our thoughts but yet so...far away. I keep forgetting that you are not getting the monthly "Epistle" from West Hebron Church so you really don't know what is going on over here. Where to start?

1985 has been a difficult year for our extended family. With John's children older there are a lot of teenage problems that families experience regardless of culture and when a child stay out all night, or someone can't find employment, or a divorce is in progress that deeply affects us all. So far a few months we all underwent emotional strain. John's married daughter, Gift, has come here to live with her two children, Rangani--1 1/2 years and Wendy--5 years. They are a joy! and yet with the joy comes added work. The divorce is in progress--all the proceedings take place on the lawn between representatives of the two families. Audrey, the husband, was told he had to bring all the bridal cattle, money, etc. that had been agreed upon at the time of the marriage if he wanted to keep Gift--he has been unable to do this. Well, from my view, he could sell the house he is building in the Parkridge high density suburb and with the money buy the cattle, etc. but I think he is content to have the marriage be over.

Then John found out that his brother had died--they think by poisoning and his nephew had been killed in a car crash. John by African custom is now the father of that family as well as his own. Already tired and emotionally worn out, John ended up with bronchitis and mono and was out of work for 2-3 weeks. Then in early April, not fully better, he left for Zambia and Malawi to check on his brothers children and his family. While he was away Sturge and I assumed the role of baba na amai (father and mother) for all his children living here. Like I say, there are benefits to everything. I shed some pounds!! and I had no trouble falling asleep at night.

John and Monicah's trip was not a luxury vacation. The only bus available was less luxurious than a U.S. school bus. Goods were tied to the roof with no tarpaulin. The seats for two looked like they could comfortably fit one. Thieving was common and John had $37.00 pickpocketed while boarding the bus, he thinks. In Zambia people were either rich or poor and prices were high and lots of good were unavailable--sugar, soap, floor polish, etc. Bread cost $1.20 (in Zim a loaf costs .39), a small chicken cost $10.00 and a coke cost .74. In Malawi the people live off the land--money is not plentiful but food is available--sweet potatoes, bananas, nuts, sugar cane, etc.

John encountered a serious problem that was unintentionally our fault. In case of emergency we had written our name, address

and phone number in his passport. When he got to the Malawi border they cancelled his passport saying it couldn't be altered in any way and telling him to return to Zim. After much conversation they allowed him to go many miles out of his way to Blantyre and apply for a new passport. This all took valuable time and money. How they made it money-wise I'll never know as they had only begun with $200.00. Thankfully they are back here with us safe and sound--an answer to prayers!

Wonderful things are happening in Chitungwiza. Simbarashe has been hired as a full-time youth worker and he has had a special ministry to the young men of Chitungwiza. It is harder with the girls for in the culture it would not be well thought of if he spent time alone studying the Scripture with a girl but he can spend as many hours as he wants with the guys.

The youth choir now has a guitar bought with money provided by the West Hebron Sunday School and Simbarashe has a bike to get him around Chitungwiza which is a huge area.

The Chitungwiza kids have their own Y.P. group but they also come in on Friday nights to the City Y.P. So, there are opportunities for the youth to cross over the racial lines if they are interested. Sturge felt the City kids should experience the effort it takes each week for the Chitungwiza group to come on the bus rather than being dropped off at the church door by car, so...one Saturday they went to Chitungwiza on the bus. They even did some singing and sharing as they rode along.

It is our hope that Simbarashe will go on to Bible College--first he has to finish his O levels (equivalent to a high school certificate). Many of the kids his age had their education interrputed by the war. He has a real love for the Lord and is able to share his faith with others. Presently in Zim there is nobody training to be a Presbyterian minister and yet we are already short of pastors.

Another person God brought us is Michael. He has been helping with some evangelism into the flats around City Church. As he visits in the homes during the day the people that are home are the domestic workers. He will share with them about Christ and often they will accept Christ into their life but--they have not come to worship at any of our services even thought there have been follow-up visits by both Sturge and Michael. Sturge is beginning to wonder if part of the response comes from a cultural politeness. The idea that these people have taken time to visit us, we should accept what they say. Comparing the two ministries--I can see that the hours and hours Simbarashe is spending with maybe 5 or 6 guys reading God's Word, singing, etc. is more what Jesus did with his disciples and though on paper the results might not look impressive--the nurture will last a lifetime and then these disciples can chose others to disciple. Michael is sincere and loves the Lord but maybe we need to have him spending time with those who have already shown an interest in the Lord and need teaching.

The emphasis at City Church is to encourage the elders and strengthen them so they can be stronger models for the church as a whole. Each elder has been assigned church families to get to know. They have been encouraged to visit in the homes and have the people into their homes. In conjunction with this, Sturge has had some home fellowship gatherings and he has intentionally seen to it that Africans have been included. Putting the Teaching aside, it has meant so much to the Africans to be welcomed into white people's homes because that was not common in Rhodesia. Africans would not drink from the same tea cups as a white person would use. John tells stories of white employers smashing cups and plates if they saw an African use it.

We have had some wildlife adventures also. Just last week we went to nearby Lake McIlwaine, which by the way looks so wonderful all filled with water. The rains this season (Dec., Jan. and Feb.) were excellent and most all the dams are full and water rationing has been cancelled. So, now you can come to visit and not have to share bathwater! The grass at Lake McIlwaine was so tall that we didn't think we'd see anything but then we almost drove by 4 grey boulders which turned out to be white rhino. They were maybe 50 feet from us. When we stopped the leader got up and faced us and just stared. I would have given more than a penny for his thoughts! We tended to be cautious as we knew a minister who had been chased a long way by a rhino. Then we saw a giraffe a long way off. He didn't look super tall but -- then he stood up!! He came over to about 10 feet from the car. Later we were surrounded by ostrich. They came single file down an incline--they had a leader too--"he" peered at us through the windscreen (as they call the windshield here) and then they surrounded us. Their legs were as tall as the roof and they puffed out their feathers as if to say, "Stay where you are!". Then they went off to lick salt and drink water.

Politically things are still unsettled. The elections are planned for June. The papers keep saying how the polling booths will be protected. The local Zanu youth continue to meet on the field outside our house and on Saturday nights we go to bed to the sounds of them marching and singing.

We went to the 5th Year Zimbabwe Independence Parade. On display at first were the soldiers, horse patrols, tanks, etc. Even though we were not here during the war I could feel my skin grow cold for you could see in the gestures of those driving the tanks, etc. that the war memories were very close to them. Then unexpectedly to me they began to shoot off parachutes and fireworks. I found myself in tears. Somehow for me it just wasn't a parade--too many thoughts went running through my brain. How many people even standing beside me had seen people die, etc.?

One final thing before I close. I want to share with you about the baptisms by immersion that we experienced while on our

youth retreat. When one of the women begin baptized came out of the water she was almost uncontrollable and tried to drown the pastor. The people know exactly what to do. They took her from the water, held her down and began to pray and pray over her. In giving up her life to Christ an evil spirit that she might not even have known lived within her was putting up a fight. The church leaders did not want to let the woman free because the evil spirit within her might have hurt someone else. My mind immediately went back to the Bible and the stories of Jesus and his casting out the demons and those stories became even more real. As I spoke to the African Christians there, they had no doubt that Jesus was more powerful than Satan. They said prayers would be offered all night if needed. After about 20 minutes the woman grew calm. We were also told that some Africans who do have evil spirits can be baptized and the demon not be threatened. If the church is lukewarm, if the church does not preach Christ crucified and the power of the blood of the lamb. I gather the Presbyterian Church does not oten see this in their baptisms--it made me thing! There is a daily/minutely battle going on between good and evil/God and Satan.

By now I've put you all to sleep. Sturge will be away living in Mbare for a week as part of an Evangelism Outreach. Also, he has been chosen to go to General ssembly in Pretoria, South Africa in September so there will still be things to share with you. Keep up your prayers for us.

Love in Christ,

Joanne

LETTER FROM STURGE POORMAN

Greetings from Zimbabwe where the good news of your calling of a pastor has reached us with great speed. Ralph Reid gave us a ring on the phone early on Monday the 10th to let us know that everything had gone well and that the Edwards family would be moving into the parsonage shortly. It was a real answer to prayer for us and I'm sure for all of you. Thanks be to God!

Here on the Zimbabwe front God brought me into some new experiences in His ministry over the past month. As the Evangelism co-ordinator for our presbytery I had become part of an evangelism team conducting a "mission" in an all black church in the Mbare section of Harare. This section is a high density, low income area whose residents are all Shona speakers. Though the district is small, there is a population of about 100,000. The team consisted of five blacks and four whites. Our purpose was to pair up with members of the Mbare church and go out two by two, knocking on doors and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. The tough part for me was that it all had to be done in Shona! My language study was really put to the test. But thanks to God's grace and some very helpful Shona partners, I was able to communicate the basics of the faith. The Shone people are very polite, so they would never refuse us entry into their homes or slam doors in our faces. They would listen attentively to our presentation, some just out of politeness, but others out of a genuine desire to hear God's word. Many, in fact, received Christ into their lives right there in their homes! The homes were small, two or three room cubicles closely packed together. One morning my partner and I made contact in 40 homes. Each of the other eight "pairs" did the same--all in an area about the size of the West Hebron firefield. The amazing thing was that I never found any resentment toward me as a white person in a totally black neighborhood. Nor did we ever find anyone ridiculing the gospel--even if they were not believers. It was really fertile ground for evangelism.

In the afternoons we would do "open air" evangelism. We would choose a spot outside of the apartment buildings and begin singing Shona Christian songs. Then we would give testimonies and preach the Word. Here I did need a translator for I am not yet able to preach extemporaniously in Shona. Yet, when I think of it, there was a time not long ago when I would have been very hesitant to "get up on the soap box" for Christ. I'm much more familiar with the security of a pulpit. Yet God blessed all of our efforts. People came forward to talk about Christ and many received Him. It was like the fish were jumping into the boat! Yet as we look to the future, the really difficult task now is keeping them in the "boat". Unless the Mbare church is able to nuture these new converts, they will be like the seed that sprouts up and is wilted by the sun. For these people are very poor - most without jobs. Worshipping, learning, or fellowshipping with Christians has never been part of their lives. Just staying alive and having enough food to eat are their real concerns. Can the existing members of the church, most of whom are in a better economic condition, really become brothers and sisters to these new converts? Without the Holy Spirit it will be impossible. With the Holy Spirit the impossible will happen!

An additional treat for me during that mission week was that I was housed in the home of a Shona family! Again my Shona was tested. I had heard from the Mbare minister that this family was worried about having me come as they had never entertained a white person in

POORMAN LETTER CONT.

their home, let alone put one up (or is it put up with one?) for a whole week. They worried if I could eat their food and they worried if I could do without a bathroom. As it turned out the food was no problem, the lack of a bathroom was. I realized how much I had come to depend on water out of a fawcet and a toilet. The Magombos (my hosts) had a grandaughter living with them. She woke up the first morning and saw me sitting at the breakfast table and let out a screem. She turned and ran right out of the house and across the street. Fortunately there are not many cars in Mbare, for she was not in the frame of mind to look both ways. I don't think she had ever seen a white person before. I decided I would make friends with her before the week was up. I would have failed in this task had it not been for Garth who brought me a "care package" midway through the week. Knowing my taste for chocolate, Garth had included some. It turned out that the little girl and I had that one thing in common--chocolate. And that was enough. She's my friend now. But I hope she is not too disillusioned when she finds that all white people don't offer chocolates for breakfast.

I'm back with the family now after my week of evangelism. I'm certainly much wiser and even more convinced of what the Lord can do with weak "instruments" who are willing to "give it a try". Our family is well. Garth is progressing in soccer, Aaron in basketball, Joanne in resourcefullness and I in years (40 now). God has been blessing us and we know that He will continue to bless the Hebron Churches as you grow together with your new pastor and his family.

In Christ's Love,

Sturge

TRUSTEES REPORT

Quite a few improvements have been made to the church and the manse lately. Both buildings have had thorough cleanups by a professional cleaning service. The front of the church has two fresh coats of paint. Harold McMorris painted the downstairs floor in the church. (Please try to lift chairs and tables when moving them to help this paint job last.) Jackie Gawronski coordinated the decorating of the church office. Many hands helped with the renovation of the parsonage. Some of these include Ralph Keys, Jim Wever, Margaret Waite, Dick Waite (don't they go together?), Skosh Snyder (editorial addition).

The chairman of the Trustees, Norm Matthews, seems to be everywhere at once -- painting the office, trimming the tall grasses around the church and following up on all sorts of little odds and ends. Thank you to everyone who has helped with the care of the church buildings. Our goal as trustees is to maintain the church buildings and grounds in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.

Skosh for the Trustees

SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 1985

DEAR LOVED ONES IN HEBRON!

Well...the countdown is underway -- 4 days until Sturge's mother and his aunt (Theda) come. Usually the days speed by but recently they are going too slowly. Their plane arrives at 5:45 AM. Hopefully the Zimbabwe sun will be up to greet them.

We woke this a.m. to a phone call from Nick TeBordo -- I should say that Sturge was awake already when the phone rang at 5:15 AM. He still rises early on Sundays to prepare for worship. From the bed I could tell how happy Sturge was to talk with Nick. They chatted on about Cohoes Church, the crusade at Corinth, Presbytery, our families, etc. It was hard to realize they were half a world apart. I hope Nick won't be speechless when he gets his phone bill. He said international calls have gone down in price. Sadly here they have gone up since direct dialing came in. The ironic thing is that people say it is far easier to call Europe or the U.S. then it is to call across Harare. The phones at City Church were out this whole last week. Sturge does admit that he secretly loves it when the phones are out.

We received a most welcome letter from Chris Edwards and--you should have gotten to him quicker because he is happy for us to continue sharing with you in the Epistle so..you've got to continue to put up with us. Along with his loving letter came a photo of he and Becky so now as we pray for them we can also visualize them. It's amazing how close you can feel to people you've never met but God has neat ways of binding us together.

As most of you probably know, the Zim elections were peaceful--a real answer to prayer! The Zanu Party picked up extra seats. However, after the election the trouble began. I had never thought to pray about after the elections. For about a week there was a LOT of violence in the high density locations. Those from the minority parties were the victims. Homes were burned, possessions were destroyed, people were locked out of their homes and had to sleep on the ground huddled by a fire. It was a fearfultime. Since then calm has come but the pressure to be a Zanu party member is great. As you can imagine many people have traded their minority cards for Zanu cards. Zimbabwe is moving toward a one party state. Even to get jobs, housing, etc. now one needs to show your Zanu card and have a recommendation from you local Zanu section. As we drive through the high density areas things look normal but the people must be suffering inner stress. It seems like more than ever the country needs Jesus. Only through Him will the people find inner peace, freedom from fear, the ability to forgive and forget.

Through these times worship has been sporadic. Many Sundays there are political rallies at the same time as worship and the people feel compelled to attend the rallies -- attendance registers are kept. Occassionally there are weekday rallies which conflict with the women's meetings. Some high density suburbs seem more hard hit then others -- Chitungwiza is a hard area politically. The believers are undergoing religious persecution and they need your prayers. We are thankful that no one in our congregation

MORE...

lost their home or possessions. The house next to where Sturge lived in Mbare during the Evangelism campaign was burned to the ground.

We live in a low density suburb and it was like we were in another country. Our lives went on the same except that as people would come and share with us we would be drawn to prayer.

We need your prayer for our work permit. It expires the end of this year. Sturge still feels called to ministry here and continues to see July 1987 as when we would return to the U.S. We means Sturge, Garth and I as Aaron may be returning in July 1986 to live with Sturge's parents and go to Lower Merion the high school Sturge graduated from. We've prayed alot about this and have not been led to tell Aaron "No". However, our feelings as parents about being separated from Aaron will grow more intense sd July comes. Pray I'll let him on the plane. It may be one of the Hardest things we've had to do but -- he's going to Sturge's family and not an unknown boarding school. Bob Myers encouraged us as he shared on a tape about his gradmother and how central a figure she was in his life and faith.

Sturge has been assigned by the Presbytery to help with a new outreach in Kuwadzana, a high density area for people making $200 or less a month. It is about 15 minutes from here by car. John has been going there twice a week to do evangelism. He located a home that was willing to let people gather there for worship. This past Sunday there were 10 adults plus he led a Sunday School of six children. In general people are hesitant to meet in homes for worship -- still these meetings can be suspected as being political cover-ups. Because of this we are eager to be assigned a plot. We were the first church denomination to apply -- go Presbyterians; but they turned us down because we didn't show proof of having $20,0 which would be used to start construction. We have made application to a Presbytery in Tennessee who might want to have a mission outreach in Zimbabwe. Most of the people John talks to have some Christian background but none of them are presently worshipping. We would like to get a Christian evangelist living out there. I'd love to see it be John though I cringe to think what life would like here without him. However he has no formal education and that holds him back from even the lay preachers plan. I believe you need a 7th grade education.

People at City are feeling uncomfortable because of a Stewardship '85 program about Christian giving. Most people don't want teaching in this area. The goal is for each person to commit a percentage of their income in thanksgiving for what God has done for them. A percentage allows for fluxation of income. Poor Herbert -- he gets the brunt of the complaints and it is hard on him. People seem to leave the church easily here -- they don't like the choruses so off they go, etc.

I had better close -- maybe next month Sturge will have a wild animal story for you as we plan to take Mom and Theda to Fothergill Island. So...tune in next month for the Zimbabwe saga. We love you all and our prayer is that as a congregation you will grow together to a deeper spiritual level.

Lots of love -- Joanne

Monday, September 16, 1986

To Our Family in Christ in Hebron--

Today's mail brought the Epistle--and what a joy that is to receive! Sorry about the "t" not working, Sue but you are doing a terrific job as editor! I devour every word. I am looking forward to Chris's articles on "How A Pastor Spends His Time" for so many people would ask...What does Sturge (or Bobby) do all week? I would always feel like responding, "What don't they do?!"

I hope you all don't feel cheated that it is me writing again but... Sturge leaves on Friday (if he gets his visa) for South Africa and I felt that after General Assembly and visiting in Capetown with Margaret and Frank he might have some insights for you on the South African situation. I know you are reading about South Africa daily in the papers and times are truly hard for the people there. I noticed in Eleanor's article that the Presbyterian women are being called to be open to the in justices in South Africa and other countries. The school where Margaret taught in Mitchell's Plain (outside Capetown, a colored area) was closed down. One of her students was killed with a hand grenade. I had planned to go with Sturge to South Africa but I could tell that Garth had reservations about both of us leaving him to go to South Africa--he is very up on current events. The paper is the first thing he looks at when he wakes in the morning. I decided to leave my going or not going up to him and he wants me to stay here.

We had a wonderful visit with Sturge's Mom and Theda! What a joy to see them. Theda thought we looked much happier and were more adjusted to life in Zim then she would have thought. That was good to hear. I was worrying about tiring them out but they seemed to have more energy then we did. One night as Sturge and I were climbing into bed I heard Mom say to Theda, "Are you tired? and Theda replied, "No, aren't you?" "Why are we going to bed then?" They decided they were going to bed because Sturge and I were tired.

The two big events were Fothergill Island in Kariba and Victoria Falls. Mom had not received my letter that told her we were thinking of taking them "camping in the bush" so she and Theda had not had a chance to say NO. When they got here the reservations were all made... believe me they were good sports! On the motorboat ride over they were almost bounced out, the lake was so rough. There was a real live elephant to greet us...grazing along the waters edge and there were toilets in each thatched hut--but with no ceilings...at night your lights were the moon and stars and by day you had all the lizards watching you shower...oh well...worse things could be watching you! Mom turned on the water and out popped a lizard. I was just thankful we saw no snakes! We did get close...very close to elephants buffalo, kudu and stood along the water edge and watched hippo--only saw their eyes and an occasional yawn. The guide promised us they would not come out of the water to attack. I gather they are quite dangerous and many women have been killed in the communal lands by unexpectedly coming across a hippo.

Really the cottages were lovely--though not fully enclosed! The thatched roofing came almost to the ground and then there was a 2' foot cement and stone wall but...the wall and roof did not connect. At night you rolled down bamboo as your walls. I kept hoping we would hear the adventure stories after we got back to Harare not

WHILE THERE. And we did meet up with someone who had been there with their five week old baby and three nights before a lion had been walking around the cottage they stayed in. Need I say the lady did not sleep for 3 nights? I prayed a lot the first night! It was so...windy and then about 2 AM an elephant let out a bellow that sounded quite close but...here I am safe in Harare telling about it.

Fothergill Island is run by a Christian couple and the reason we chose it--there are other similar places and I guess they are more built up (more luxurious)--was they gave a discount to full-time Christian workers. There were moments we wished we had stayed on the mainline in a proper hotel and gone fishing but...God kept us safe and now we have neat memories. Wonder if Mom and Theda would do it again?

They all found Victoria Falls brethtaking--an amazing act of creati by our God. Sturge said he did not have enough time to sit and wate the falls--they were on a one day tour. He ate lunch quickly and dashed back on his own. I have a feeling he will find his way back there before we leave Zim.

Mom felt alot safer in Zimbabwe then she thought she would. Parts of it reminded her of Bermuda--the flowering trees, the climate. She liked the fact that Herbert is like a father to us and he keeps close tabs on where we go. Before we drove to Kariba he checked with all sorts of people--including truck drivers--to make sure the route was safe. She and Theda got a pretty overall view--they saw where we lived (low density suburb), the high density locations and they went to Monicah's Mothers in the communal lands. We now have photos of the two ambuyas together! Ambuya was so excited that she gave Mom a <u>live</u> chicken, fresh egs, lemons, and a Shona vase. Mom certainly felt that they were excited to meet her!

Since we were not working for two weeks we are more out of touch with things at City/Chitungwiza/Kuwadzana than usual. Thankfully God keeps working even when we are on leave. The membership is growing at Kuwadzana. The primary school has opened there and we are going to ask for a classroom to worship in. Michael is goin to try to finda room to rent there and we will give him a 3 month trial as a full-time evangelist and teacher. We sense the need for teaching on a regular basis on the fundamentals of the faith.

You all continue to be in our prayers! And we are thankful that through letters, phone calls, the <u>Epistle</u>, etc. we can pray specifically for people.

Lots of love--

Joanne for us all

Well I'm safely back from South Africa! I thank you for your prayers during my time at the General Assembly in Pretoria. God led me safely there and back by train, car and plane. (You knew I'd just have to take a train somewhere along the line.) I encountered no violence during my two weeks there, but the personal reports of the violence already experienced by our balck Presbyterian friends in South Africa was enough to make me cry. During the General Assembly a special time was given where first-hand reports of what was going on in the black townships could be given. In past Assemblies the black Presbyterians had been unwilling to speak about their suffering for fear of "informers" in the crowd who would turn them in to the government. This year however there was no such fear. Not that there weren't still "informers" in the crowd. It was just that the suffering was so great that they couldn't hold back sharing it with us, their white brothers and sisters. They told of their townships where homes were burning and children were dying. One minister recounted the story of officiating at a funeral where the police gave only 30 seconds for the crowd to disperse before charging with sjamboks and rubber bullets. Another minister had led a march in Sharpville to protest government racial policies. They didn't shoot at him--only at those behind him in the marrch. He was just arrested. A black elder told of his little children who were frightened to death of any white person they saw thinking that they were police. Others shared their anguish that they no longer had any control over their older children--the young people's rage against apartheid had become so great. Even their 12 year olds were throwing stones at the army vehicles patroling through the townships--knowing full well that the soldiers were pointing their guns at them. A leading black woman elder confessed before us all that when she had heard that a policeman had been killed in her neighborhood she had replied, "It serves him right". She asked forgiveness for so calously regarding the life of one of her enemies But that is the way it is. Our black brothers and sisters in South Africa need our prayers.

After the Assembly I got down to Capetown to visit Margaret and Frank. (You remember Margaret of Rotary Exchange student days in Hebron?) They are very active in an Anglican (Episcopal) Church there. They are leaders in a music ministry--Frank as a percussionist and arranger, Margaret on the sax and piano (not all at the same time!). I got Margaret to take me out to the "colored" township near Capetown where she used to teach. It's called Mitchell's Plain. When the rioting had become severe a few weeks back she had resigned her teaching post. She had been one of the few white teachers on the staff. She told me of one of her students having been killed by a hand gre nade just before she left. On the day we went out most of the students were boycotting classes. The teachers were just millin around the schoolyard. Armed police vehicles patrolled. Overhead a survelience plane checked for gatherings of students which by that time had become illegal. Earlier in the day helicopters with loud speakers urged all students to return to classes. Most gave no heed to the "voice" from the sky. Needless to say the atmosphere was very tense. We didn't stay long.

MORE...

POORMAN LETTER, con't.

Right now it is very risky to have friends and contacts across the color line in South Africa. Yet that's what nees to happen--especial among Christians. For without that contact the alienation will become even more severe. Yet whites risk being stoned even when making a friendly call into a black or "colored" township. Blacks or "coloreds" who are seen to be associating with whites---even their own Christian brothers and sisters--can be labeled as "sell-outs" and risk mob destruction of their homes and even death. The call for the South African Christian right now is--as Jesus did--to take the risks necessary to bring reconciliation. The strong Christians are the key to South Africa's future. But I believe they will have to suffer. Pray for them!

Back in Harare things seem so much more peaceful.. Zanu and Zapu have even renewed talksof reconciliation! As far as my job goes it looks like we'll be here until December 1986--the Lord willing. A few months ago I thought that we might be coming back as early as August, but Christmas '86 seems more realistic at this point. But please don't stop praying for our work over here! In these next 13 months there is still much to be done and your prayers have been so important to our ministry. Just recently the Chitungwiza church has finally secured some property on which to start building! The new evangelism work in Kuwadzana is going well. I am co-ordinating this for the presbytery. Michael Zimindo is the evangelist--he lives there now. Our own John Joya is the head elder! Today is the first day for our new meeting place---under a big tree in the middle of a field. We "borrowed" the tree from a 7th Day Adventist group who naturally didn't need it on Sunday. Actually, it was God's all along. The tree will make a big difference as many people were feeling uncomfortable crowding into the small home that we had used for worship. Six rough benches were made this week so the adults wouldn't have to sit on the ground. You know where that leaves the kids.....

At City Church we're on the final week of a stewardship program emphasizing percentage giving. There's been a lot of "flack" about it, but at least there has been the opportunity to learn from the Scriptures what God is telling us about His way of giving. We are enjoying our Sunday evening fellowship groups. It'sthere where we get to know some of the church people on a deeper level. Still change comes slowly at City Church. Ultimately it is the Holy Spirit who brings the change that He wnats. And there are people here who are opening to His power.

Aaron is preparing for his Junior Certificate exams. They're tough. His whole mark in each subject will be determined by the one exam! Garth has finished his "Grade 7 exams". It was just English and Math so except for the "Brittish-isms" in English, I'm sure he did well.

Joanne and I--as well as Aaron and Garth are thinking of the days when we will return to the United States. We, of course, don't know where we'll be and that causes some anxiety. But we know our Lord doesn't want us to be anxious and that he wants us to trust in His provision. I am constantly reminded by Him that too much looking to the future causes opportunities in the present to slip away. So for right now there is much work to be done here just as there is with you in Hebron. Please continue your prayers for us. We pray for the Hebron churches each day. And both <u>here</u> and <u>there</u> we see prayers being answered. What a mighty God we serve!

In Christ's Service, Sturge

November 27, 1985

Dear Loved Ones--

As Thanksgiving approaches (tomorrow!) I realize that I am way behind as far as getting off Christmas greetings. Living half way around the world from those we love means I need to be organized but....even if I fail in that area, this greeting will get to you eventually. Being away from home at Christmas forces me to focus more on Jesus and what his birth, life, death and resurrection means for all the "normal" Christmas sights, sounds, smells, feelings are not here. My prayer is that instead of being sad and lonely I will truly come closer to the meaning of Christmas and to Christ. Our pray for all of you that we love and miss is that this Christmas as you turn your eyes to Jesus that He will reveal Himself to you in an even deeper way and that you will be able to cast all your joys, sorrows, problems with health, etc. onto Him for He is able to carry them and free you from the load. Though far away we celebrate the birthday of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ with you!

Since Thanksgiving is tomorrow I should start by telling you that we will be celebrating Thanksgiving with some American friends who are here with Navigators. We plan to go the whole way--turkey, stuffing (though there is a bread shortage and I did not think ahead so I can't make stuffing--I hope Janet has some bread in her freezer!), potatoes, cranberry sauce (brought by Mom Poorman when she came in September) and even pumpkin pie. Mark and Janet Lewis are the couple whose home we are going to and they have a video and their parents have sent over some football games to watch so...it should be a typical Thanksgiving Day. Sturge and I also went to a Thanksgiving Dinner put on by the American Woman's Club--Pan Am even made a special stop in Zim (or this is what I was told) to deliver cranberry sauce. We also heard President Regan's Thanksgiving message which was read to us from somebody from the American Embassy.

Since May alot of wonderful things have been happening in the ministry here. The Chitungwiza Church is much closer to having their own stand--place to build. Until the papers are signed we can't be 100% sure but...it is very hopeful! The location is not ideal--we are by the Chitungwiza garbage dump. Why did we chose that spot? Well, it was not our choice. The town council decides where churches can be built--it seems obvious that they pick spots nobody else would want which may say something about the governments priority for Christianity. We had been assigned this same spot two years ago and turned it down. The dump plus large balancing rocks on the site did not allow enough room for building. The town council has now given us two plots. The balancing rocks can not be moved but they will be a super conversation piece! Our neighbors in this spot are all the other churches. Some have already put up fencing--the United Methodist Church is fully built. Freedom of worship is still difficult for them because of their past association with Bishop Muzorewa--he has resigned from political office here and I believe he is in the United States.

Sturge has been quite involved with a new Presbytery project on evangelism and church growth. Because of this we have been doing quite a bit of work in a new, high density location called Kuwadzana. I believe quite a bit of money for this project is coming from the U.S. People who live here are supposed to earn $200 per month or less. The government gives them loans based on their income and they are supposed to meet certain building requirements within a certain amount of months. The reason for this is that people will not just put up one room and remain there forever. Michael, who was working in the City, is now living in Kuwadzana--he rents one room for $25 per month--and doing evangelism and teaching. John Joya, our worker and special friend, is the head elder there. The first ten members were taken in in November. The meeting place for this new church is under a tree--and not even a very gorgeous tree. We had tried to rent a primary school classroom but the town council said no. Would you believe, we even had to get permission to use the tree--the 7th Day Adventists had gotten there first and were using it on Saturdays. Very basic benches were made so that the adults would not have to sit on the ground and the guy who made the benches threw in a basic pulpit. Living here has made me realize that you can worship anywhere. We have worshipped in a small living room with 60 people crammed inside. Literally if you have to get up you have to step on people to get out. And now...under a tree--which is fine on a warm, sunny day but...when it is grey, windy and with lightening in the distance (like it was last time we were there) you do have to keep reminding yourself to concentrate on Jesus and not on the lightening streaks.

Sturge was just recently offered a new job here in Zim. It was to be project co-ordinator of this Urban Evangelism and Church Growth Program. However he decided to continue at City Church and to just oversee this program as his Presbytery responsibility. Along that same line--the City Church has applied for an extension to our work permit until January 1987. As it looks now we will be returning to the U.S. In December 1986--so next year you get us for a Christmas card! I should say that Aaron will be coming home before us--in August 1986. He will live with his grandparents in Ardmore and we are hoping he will go to Lower Merion. Aaron begins his sophomore year in Sept. 1986 and it seems best that he do that in the U.S. as the school systems are so very different. We have spent a lot of time praying about this--letting him go will be harder than him going for Nonnie and Grandpop's home and the whole Ardmore area is very familiar and comfortable for him. We need your prayers for this whole change!

Things were very difficult here following the elections. The white low density suburbs (like where we live) were not affected but the locations, like Chitungwiza, Highfield, etc. were very much thrown into panic. Houses were burned, possessions were destroyed, etc. Since the Zanu party did so well that gave them the confidence to pressure others who were in opposing parties to "join them". For quite a few weeks we were unable to worship in Chitungwiza. People would sit up all night guarding their homes. I was amazed to find that the women were often times the ones doing the violence. And--since the elections there have been <u>many</u> political meetings. Often the church is half full because all the others are at a meeting. I had never thought to pray for what went on <u>after</u> the elections. Zimbabwe is pretty much headed toward a one party, socialist state.

Our summer highlight was a visit from Sturge's Mom and his aunt, Theda! They were here with us for 2 weeks and the time went by much too quickly. We always save our adventures for our guests--though they may wish we would go on them alone! Our two big events with Mom and Theda were Fothergill Island in Kariba and Victoria Falls. The purpose of going to Fothergill was to be close to wild animals--and we were. The huts were not even fully closed in--bamboo curtains "protected" us from the out-of-doors. We went over from the mainland by motor boat and it was rough! Poor Garth got sick--he would have wanted to return to the mainland immediately but he knew his only choice back was---boat. As we docked there was an elephant grazing maybe 40 feet from us. Is that close enough for you? Our first cottage did not have a toilet attached and we all looked at each other in panic but thankfully they changed us to another hut. The toilets and showers were open to the air so the moon and stars were your lights at night. Really it was quite nice but...most of us on this trip were not campers and the elephant calling out in the middle of the night did keep us awake. We did feel thankful we saw no snakes--though Garth saw a cobra when he was at Lake McIlwaine with his school class. Victoria Falls seemed very calm and luxurious compared to Fothergill Island. Sturge could have stayed a long, long time just watching the falls. They are beautiful! Magnificent! It makes you realize again what a marvelous creator our God is!

Sturge went to South Africa in September and I believe that all of you got copies of Sturge's observations from his time there. I would like to share a little more with you from a recent letter from Margaret. By sharing these things it is our hope that your prayers for South Africa will be able to be more intense. This information is on Mitchell's Plain--a colored section outside of Cape Town. The school children are still boycotting or being made to boycott. Because Cape Town has declared a state of emergency the police have the absolute right to do anything. The police are making life very difficult for the teachers and the students. They can come onto the school property and arrest at random, which they do. If a teacher is not in his/her classroom when they are supposed to be, they can be arrested. They have to be able to present lesson plans to prove that they are working and any children found on the streets and not at school are arrested. The people are living under tremendous pressure! The worst thing about the state of emergency is that the press are not allowed to report what is going on. So even the people living in nearby CapeTown don't know from day to day what is going on. Margaret knows quite a number of people who have been arrested and are in detention without charge and without trial. They are not allowed lawyers and can be kept there indefinitely. It is particularly a hard time for students for now is exam time. There is a big movement by the boycotters to prevent the students from writing their exams. If they want to write their exams they have to go to other locations and write their exams under police and army guard for fear of being attacked by other boycotting students. A friend of Margaret's is a teacher at a colored school and he has 5 matric students staying with him in his home so that they can study for their exams without being harrassed. These students had started to write their exams and the mother of one of the students received a death threat. It said that all the students plus the 'white teacher who was helping them' would be 'got' if they wrote any more exams. There has been a lot of petrol bombing of homes--especially those where students are writing exams. It is an agonizing decision for

a 16 or 17 year old student to make--to give up 12 years of study or to put their lives and the lives of their families at risk. It all sounds so depressing and yet we who don't have to be in the situation can pray with more hope.

Well, there is more I could share but I am sure you have had to read this in installments already--especially with it being Christmas and your mailbox probably being filled with cards. Please continue to pray for us--it is the prayers that have let us be able to live and minister here. If you have specific things you would like us to be praying about for your family please drop us a note and we will be happy to do that.

Happy Jesus' Birthday!

Lots of love,
Sturge, Joanne, Aaron & Garth

Tuesday, December 17th, 1985

Dear loved ones--

I can't believe that I am about to repeat my "stunt" o last month and not get this letter off to Sue in time. I keep waiting so I can give you the up-to-date news and then...I wait too long and tealize the letter won't make the Epistle deadline. The December Epistle came today and it was a super one. I enjoyed reading the the whole issue! Chris, even here, half a world away I am being ministered to by YOU--it is so very evident that you are striving to be all that God has desired for you to be be. Your commitment to prayer, God's Word and meeting people where they are has again helped me to focus on what I need to be doing. It is so very easy to forget and yet how much better our life goes when we do it God's way!!

Christmas is almost upon us.. It is the rainy season and the house is often decorated with mud--red clay mud. Believe me, when it gets on your clothes it does not come out! We plan to decorate on Friday night. We will have a Christmas tree though the Epistle article made me have second thoughts where it said..."In African homes you see very few tinsel bedecked Christmas trees because trees are much too precious for sustaining life." If it was not for the boys I think I might forgo the Christmas tree and use somethnig else. Even in Zimbabwe there is a tree shortage. The big government push now is to get people to re-plnat trees after they have taken others down.

We plan to spend Christmas Eve and Christmas Day with John and his family. We will all go together to Kuwadzana Presbyterian where Sturge will preach and celebrate communion. I should be praying that it would not rain from 10 a.m. until noon for the Kuwadzana Pres. Church meets under a tree--and not a very healthy one at that! It more makrs the spot. It is a busy tree as the 7th Day Adventists use it on Saturdays. We have been very encouraged by the results of the Kuwadzana ministry--God is working! There is worshipping body of about 60. Men are beginning to come. Some simple benches have been purchased. Also hymnbooks have been purchased. The women are meeting weekly for women's association. There is a Sunday School. There is a teaching session and time of prayer and fellowship each Wednesday evening. The town council has also let choose a spot on which to build a church. It now has to get one more stamp of approval and then there will be deadlines to meet--fence in property, put in foundation, etc. by certain dates. We will have to trust God for the money. Ther is a US Presbytery "down south" that is praying about helping us undertake the whole big evangelism and church growth program. Even here I think a simple church and house would cost about $100,000. On incomes of $200 or less per month...well...we need a Math major to figure out how long it would take for the people to save that money. Sturge was asked to leave his work at City Church and head up this Evangelism Project. At first he thought he might but after time in prayer and the Word he realized that God wanted him to remain at City and to continue "part-time" in this work. We are praying for a co-ordinator that will take over when we return to the U.S. Sturge has enjoyed this work. He likes the one-on-one discipleship with John, Michael, Simbarashe, etc. As he encourages and teaches then they immediately go out and share what they have learned.

MORE...

It makes Sturge think very long and hard about the words and truths that he shares.

The school year has ended. The boys begin again mid-January. They are both awaiting results of exams. Sturge will take off two weeks beginning Dec. 23rd. We wanted to go away for 2 days but found we were way too late in making bookings. All the major hotels had been booked since June or earlier. I gather many Zimbabweans are staying in the country this year. Part of the reason is the fallen South African Rand value and even if they have money in South Africa they want to save it and hope the value will go up again. Also the Zim dollar is not worth anythin outside the country and travel costs for air fares, etc. are zooming. But...the Zim hotels should be smiling.

Have any of you seen "King Solomon's Mines"? I guess I should hesitate to ask before we check it out and see what kind of film it is. Quite a bit of it was filmed here in Zimbabwe. There was one set out near Victoria Falls and one near the Lion and Chettah Park, just about 15 miles away from our home! The premier for Zim is tommorrow night. We'll give you some comments once we see it ourselves.

Things are still very tense in South Africa. Prayers are still much needed. Students had a very hard time during exam periods. There was a big movement by the boycotters to prevent students from writing exams. If the black or colored students wanted to write they had to leave their normal school, go to another location and be under police and army guard. Some homes where students were studying received death threats. Many homes were petrol bombed. It was a rough decision to put on the shoulders of a 17 or 18 year old--they had been studying for these exams for 12 years and yet sh should they put their lives and the lives of their families at stake??

Due to the state of emergency in some areas the press is not allowed to cover what is going on so alot of the whites in South Africa are in the dark about what is going on only a few miles away from them. Information has to come from contacts who live in the black and colored areas. People we know have had family members detained in South Africa. It is all very difficult!

The roof is off the church we worship in in Chitungwiza. I gather part of the problem is that the Lutheran Church does not have the money needed to buy the roofing. Costs have obviously mounted up to more than they had counted on. Our location under a cluster of trees has been truly lovely except when the thunder and lightening begins. Last week with clouds very dark only 6 people showed up for worship. Even though we almost have a church site in Chitungwiza we still need to worship at St. Mary's for many, many months more. It will be a blessing to have a roof over our heads again!

Our prayer for you as a congregation entering 1986 is that as a family of believers you will all be drawn closer to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and that through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit you will be able to be more Christ-like. We love you!

Joanne for our whole family

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Hebron Churches,

Year #3 has begun for the Poorman family in Zimbabwe. Actually, we've been here long enough now that we could take out Zimbabwean citizenship if we desired. But don't worry -- that's not part of the plan. We really value our American passports, especially since it still looks as if we'll be returning to the USA in December of this year. Along that line, please be praying for us that God will be preparing a church for us when we return. Job hunting from 9000 miles away will not be easy. But since your prayers helped open the doors for us to be ministering over here in Africa, I'm sure they will be just as effective in preparing a church for us when we return.

Christmas in Zimbabwe was again ushered in by the welcomed rains of the summer rainy season. We had a big celebration on Christmas eve with John Joya and his family. There are 12 people in this "extended family" of ours so there were many gifts under our little tree. We continued our celebration on Christmas day with a worship service at our newly formed Kuwadzana church. John is the head elder there. He helped lead the worship. I preached and baptised 4 new members. Four others were received from other Christian churches. You remember our discussions in West Hebron about the length of our worship services? Well, this Christmas service in Kuwadzana went about 2½ hours! I can't say that Aaron and Garth were real pleased, especially since they were the first to arrive at the tree. Yes, we're still worshipping under a tree. Thankfully, in the midst of the rainy season, God spared us on that Christmas morning. People tend to arrive at various times during the worship. At one point we had to delay the induction of new members when we saw one of the "inductee" in the distance slowly making her way toward the tree. Patience is needed. But during times of waiting, we sing. Some younger members of my immediate family noted that we started at Hymn #1 in the hymnbook and went one by one all the way through!

Now that the new year has arrived, we have returned to the school schedule. Both Aaron and Garth are now at Prince Edward School (the high school in our area). Since this is Garth's first year he had to get a whole new uniform along with various accessories. His hair had to be trimmed short and he had to be prepared to be beaten if he stepped out of line in regard to any of the numerous rules and regulations at P.E. He has survived so far. Aaron who is a veteran at P.E., this being his third year, is not worried. His status as a first team basketball player gives him some respect -- something that the lowly Form 1's like Garth don't get. Aaron is taking Physics, Chemistry, and Biology at at various times during the week. Garth got hit with Latin, Shona and Technical drafting along with his regular subjects. Oh well, it won't do them any harm. Garth is not happy about the rule that cricket is compulsory for all Form 1's. He, like Aaron, would prefer playing basketball every day.

My work at City Church this year will involve me in one-on-one discipling relationships with Simbarashe at Chitungwiza, John and Michael in Kuwadzana, and Lazarus in the City. We have Bible study together and I review their work as evangelists and Christian leaders. This is a very rewarding part of my work. God is teachin me a great deal about Christian leadership and I feel very privileged to be used by God in the training of these men. Please p pray that I could have a similar relationship with one or tow of our elders at the main City Church to know one another better. We will still be having elders over to our home and I will be encouragi the development of more evening fellowship groups. Our evangelism program in the surrounding "flats" has more workers now MORE...

(Lazarus is one of them) but prayer is still needed that the plentiful harvest will be gathered and incorporated into the fellowship of the church. Our youth group needs your prayers as well. Specifically you could pray that I will be used as an instrument of reconciliation. There are more black members now than white -- by quite a margin. The white youth are not as excited about participating now. They need encouragement -- and that is why I am here. Two years ago the effort was to make the blacks -- both the youth and the adults -- feel comfortable in our church. Now that the tide has shifted among the youth and is steadily shifting among the adults my ministry will need to change. Pray for me as it is much easier for me to work with the blacks than it is for me to work with the whites. My role as director of evangelism for the Presbytery here is an exciting one as we are the forefront of the church planting in the newly developing "high density" residential areas. Joanne is a great help in this as she dows all the correspondance to the Us.S. presbyteries and churches who are contributing to this work.

During these coming months there will be the danger that I will spend too much time looking ahead to the U.S. and forget that God has called me here for a purpose, i.e. reconciliation and training. Certainly I will have to go through the tedious procedure of preparing a dossier for prospective churches in the USA, and I realize there will need to be much correspondnece back and forth across the ocean. But I really want to be used by God in my remaining time here. The opportunities are here -- there is no lack of work to be done. Pray simply that I will be able to diligently do the work that God has set before me. For that's all he ever asks us to do.

Thanks so much for all your cards and notes and letters and <u>prayers</u>. When our time here is done on of the things that will stand out clearly about our experience is how much we felt the power of the prayers of our friends there in the Hebron Churches. Thinking back to August 1982 when I first announced to you my sense of calling to southern Africa, I can say, in Paul's words that "I am thankful for you partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."(Phil. 1:5)

We pray that God's power will continue to be made known through the Hebron churches.

In Christ's Service,

Sturge

March 14, 1986

Dear Christian Family in Hebron--

If I don't get my fingers moving across these keys I think that some of our family members might disown us. Yes, Sturge was the last one to write and he is waiting for me to do my part. Sometimes the end of the month catches me by surprise and thus I am too late for the Epistle. Also, our life has more of a routine to it and so there aren't quite so many stories to tell. That does not mean that God is not working but. . . the complexities of His working are harder to put onto paper without going on and on. As I am writing Wendy and Manga are in our bathtub so . . . things are kind of noisy. I guess our bathtub has become their swimming pool. It has been hot!.

Today the Epistle came--always a treat! It was a lovely cover and I wondered who did it? I'll have to re-read the Epistle and see if I missed that fact. I always read the Epistle a couple of times--first to get caught up on the people--to see what is going on in their lives and then to read the other facts.

The last month didn't go quite as planned. Herbert went to South Africa--he will probably be there alot this year in preparation for his moderatorship of the General Assembly beginning in September. While there he attended a black pastors conference and . . . the conference ground was far from 4 star! Water had to be carried to flush toilets, etc. Anyway, he came home and got very sick and was in the hospital for a few days. They now think it was a bacterial infection. Then . . . as he was coming back to work, Sturge and I came down with bad colds and Sturge's cold promptly went to his lungs--you all remember how that is! He has learned to go right to the doctor and get an antibiotic. Then . . . just as he was recuperating it was time for the Presbyterian ministers retreat. It was at Fothergill Island in Kariba this time. I can picture it all perfectly for we had gone there with Mom Poorman and Theda. Sturge enjoys that kind of thing and . . . he came back with a nice tan on his face. He also came home with another elephant story--though he was not in on it first hand. Does it still count? Two weeks before on one of the early morning walking tours--Sturge and Aaron had been on one while we were there!--they did come upon a mother elephant with a baby. Rob Finn had told them that a mother would charge and . . . she did not disappoint the group. She charged right at Rob. He told the group to scatter and he shot a couple of bulletts into the air hoping to discourage the elephant but . . . she kept right on coming. Finally he had to shoot at her. He hit her right between the eyes--the only place where you can kill an elephant--and she fell right at his feet. What a walk! To be honest, I'm glad I was not there. Rob went back during the day to check on the little baby and he had attached himself to another mother elephant and was nursing happily. Garth was very glad he had not been along. He said at Mana Pools he had not been afraid of the elephants because "he did not know what they could do" but . . . once that elephant chased their car then he knew they were not to be messed with. While Sturge was out fishing an elephant came swimming across the lake. It came closer and closer and Sturge could tell it did not see their little boat. Finally the guide started up the motor so that the elephant would know they were there. A few of the ministers even dove into Lake Kariba for a swim (though they did not linger long)--they did wait till they were far from shore for they had seen crocodiles as they were motoring out.

Sturge is presently involved in teaching a course for lay preachers and evangelists on Presbyterian doctrine, Bible, evangelism, etc. He is one of four ministers who are teaching. It will be for 5 Saturday mornings and they will present certificates at the close of the time. We are all excited about this for it shows a real commitment on the part of the Presbytery to evangelism and church growth.

Today might be Aaron's last official Prince Edward basketball game. They play Churchill. They don't offer basketball second term though Aaron will still practice. He has not been real pleased about recent development of locking the rims. It is still our plan to get Aaron return to the U. S. in late July. We have told him not to fill all his letters with wonderful words about pizza, tuna fish, boiled ham, bagels, etc.

I spend alot of my time doing correspondance--just interpreting about life in Zim for various churches. The letters often come from the most unexpected places. Recently I have done alot with Tennessee churches who might become involved in the Zim Urban Evangelism and Church Growth Project. You know, I wish I could get a paid job when I return to the States doing this type of thing--I do enjoy it! I also spend quite a lot of hours preparing for the Bible Study which I seem to be the leader of. We are studying the book of Nehemiah and he certainly is a gifted leader and a man of prayer. Our Bible study is also taking on the aspect of a Prayer Group--modeled very much after the West Hebron after church group. Leon, I am ready for you to come take over any time! However, I am sure nobody in Hebron would spare you. I had been so sad when our Sunday Morning Prayer group ended and yet . . . God just seemed to open up this praying at the close of our Bible Study. However, we are getting home much later but people don't seem to be complaining.

Interruption--back hours later. Believe me, after this afternoon the Mary McClellan Hospital in Cambridge looks like a four star hotel! As I was typing I was called to pick up Monicah's sister who had had a baby yesterday late afternoon. She was being discharged from the Maternity Clinic after being there less then 24 hours. She was in a ward of about 20 beds. Each covered with a piece of leather like one might use for upholstering a chair. There was a pillow, no pillow cover, a wool blanket and a crochet blanket. That is that! No nightstand, water jug, sheets, etc. While there she had been served no food. No doctor had seen the baby. When the nursing sister phone me to pick her up she asked me to bring a blanket to wrap the baby in. I had none so I took a towel. The baby looked so frail and tiny on that big bed. There was no little cradle, no pink or blue hair ribbons, etc. This is the typical clinic for a high density location--less than basic!

Since my eyelids are beginning to close I had better end this letter--sorry Lori for all the typing mistakes!! It is our prayer that as a body of believers you celebrated a very special Lenten season together and what you are feeling renewed in your faith in Christ. What sadness we feel that Christ had to suffer to for our sin but yet such joy that He was willing to do this for us. Alleluia-He is risen and we are made new in Him.

Lots of Love!

Joanne

Friday, April 25, 1986

Dear Loved Ones--

Well...I have been putting off this letter waiting for the official word regarding our work permit denial appeal but...so far, all we have is unofficial word that we can stay until the end of September 1986. Yes, that is a different date then in our Thanksgiving letter to you all. What is happening???? As you know our work permit expired on January 14, 1986. The City Church had applied for a one year extension and until March 19th we had heard nothing. There are some complex ramifications to that but we have just tried not to think about them--for example if we needed to leave the country and then get back in we could not for our passports are not valid. On March 19th the City Church received a letter saying that our extension had been denied and that we should report to Immigration. Poor Herbert did not sleep at all that night and in the morning, before he told Sturge all this, he wrote a letter of appeal. In this letter he asked that City Church receive permission for Sturge to stay until the end of September. I did not read the letter but one of the major reasons is because the General Assembly for all of Southern Africa is being held at City Church late in September and Herbert would really like Sturge's help and moral support--you see, Herbert is going to be inducted as moderator of the whole General Assembly of Southern Africa--quite an honor! It also means that he can't be dashing about solving all the little problems.

We have had mixed feelings about this change of date--as you can well imagine we are eager to be home and to talk face-to-face to our family and loved ones! We have been gone a long time! And yet...there is work here to be done and...not all that many trained Christian leaders. Many Presbyterian churches are already without pastors. There is only one Presbyterian training in Seminary at the present time and...new churches are being planted in these high density locations. So, we are torn. We do feel thankful that God has lead Sturge to be involved in so much one-on-one discipleship during his time here. We know that God will continue to work through these Christians even when we are gone.

So, unofficially, we have plane reservations for October 2nd to fly to London and then to Philadelphia. I believe we arrive home sometime on Friday afternoon the 3rd of October. Again there are mixed feelings--the joy of hugging and kissing those we love and just relaxing in their presence and...the knowledge that we want to find work and a place to live. We want Aaron and Garth to be able to get settled in school, etc. Mom and Dad Poorman have offered their home to us for as long as we need to stay with them and that is where we will be because Aaron is coming back to the U.S.A. the first of August and he will start school at Lower Merion. With all the terrorists activities we need your prayers about this as well. We don't want to over react but then again we would not want to send Aaron off on the plane if it would be unsafe. Really our only guidance here can come from our Lord!

Let me say that we are not the only Christian workers who have had their work permit extensions denied. This is happening to Christian workers across Zimbabwe and in a lot of the denominations it is causing serious staffing shortages. I am uncertain what it means from the political point of view. I know that the country has felt that some of the large

Christian groups have come in and taken advantage of the masses. I know it is hard to research each Christian worker but...the work of God could be hampered. However, through prayer, the work will get even stronger as indigenous Christians step out in faith.

Obviously we want to continue to be involved in Zimbabwe, even if we are living in the United States. Hopefully there are ways that we can share about our experiences here and people will continue to be led to contribute to the building of churches and evangelism here. For in a newly developing country there is such a need for Jesus Christ. We want the nation to be walking with Him and not away from him!

Sturge has been trying to work on his dossier so that it can begin to circulate in the U.S. It is hard to write down on paper "how wonderful you are"--Sturge is not comfortable with this type of thing. His first draft, I thought, really undersold himself and I have been encouraging him to re-do it and state things like how he has been involved in evangelism, church planting, staff administation, etc.

Garth and Aaron are now both at the same school--Prince Edward. I know Garth was very happy that he had had an older brother to pave the way for him. Alot of the things they do remind me more of our colleges then high schools. There is quite a bit of intimidation aimed at the "little Form lers" but...Garth knew quite a few of Aaron's friends and that kept him out of the limelight. They have both done well at school this last term. They are on vacation right now. Both of them played basketball.

In the ministry--Kuwadzana has been assigned a stand and so...when we get some money in we can begin to build. The Presbytery of Mashonaland, of which Sturge is a member, has submitted a proposal to the U.S.A. Presbyterian Church for money to help pay evangelists and build churches in these new high density locations. We have had churches and Presbyteries respond by asking for more information but...things like this take time. I think the first thing will be to fence in the property. Then they might put up some kind of open-sided tent that could be used to worship under. Eventually we would like the building to be used for worship but also community service things like a day-care center, adult literacy, maybe even a young baby clinic, etc. The government wants all buildings to be multi-purpose.

Political meetings have slowed down some. However the people in Kuwadzana were upset when members of the Zanu party came along and chopped down their corn that was planted along the roadside. The issue is a tough one. The town council had told people to only plant vegetables on their own plots--however, the plots are very small and the families are large. In the past they have been told this but...the rule was not enforced. This year, just as the corn was ready to eat, it was chopped down ~~but~~ by groups of men with large cutting knives. I happened to be there that day and the whole area just watched in silence. And yet--from an agricultural point of view, or maybe conservation is a better word, that land needs to be claar to help with erosion, etc. But--it did not endear the party to the people.

Just this past month a new area for church evangelism has opened up--Hatcliffe. This is in the early, early stages. Lazarus Stazio is going out there on Wednesdays and Sundays. The nice thing is that some of the first people he spoke to were excited about having a place to worship and they have helped him ~~but~~ by preparing the ground around the tree, etc. We are hoping this ministry will be strong before we leave!

I would like to include some information from Presbyterian Life--a publication of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa. They are now trying to print articles dealing with the struggle in S.A. as seen by various Presbyterian workers. We share these things with you so that you will have first-hand accounts of some of the things going on there. This report was written by a young minister one month after commencing in his first charge.

"I arrived in Dorrington on the 7th February. I was warmly welcomed. But until today I have not settled my feet on the ground yet. The situation is so tense. Children do not go to school. Leaders in the community are fighting against each other. Almost everyday two or three houses are burnt down. In one case, an old man and a child were burnt to ashes in the house. The Police are shooting. And most people who die are children of about 11-16 years.

Right now I write to you to let you know that on Saturday dawn (9th March) the Police came to my house and kicked the doors. Flashing me with torches and all they wanted to know was who am I? Where do I work? And I had difficulty to prove to them that I am employed by the Presbyterian Church. They broke my door as they marched out. And during that night just before midnight some of my members were attending a night vigil. The Police just got in, shambocked old men and women, young children. They arrested some of my youth members. And they are still in jail. Above all, they shot two young people (a boy 15 yrs. and a girl, years unknown but is about 12 years). This boy belongs to the Payi family, who are my congregation. And I have to go and bury him.

During the night it is hard to sleep because the police are using a search light. So my house, especially my bedroom will be bright as day light. I can't sleep in normal conditions. I cannot study in normal conditions. Even one of my PAT assignments is very late for submission because the police would sometimes prescribe time for dark hours. Above all I am duty bound to attend to the funerals which occur so constantly. The members of the Church all live in constant fear. On Sundays I have to make services as short as I can. For people can no longer afford to stay long hours out of their homes.

All these I take with a good spirit for I learn how to Minister in a crisis situation. Though I am not happy about the souls which we miss out because of the situation. Yours in Christ, Patrick Mafa"

Note: Since this was written this young minister's manse was burnt down during the rioting. A special offering has been taken for his personal belongings, as a token of support and care for him.

So...as you all well know, South Africa continues to need your prayers. All the people need to tune in their hearts to God and listen to His wisdom and guidance for He is the only one who knows the right path.

Before I close I just want to say we have just returned from 4 days in Inyanga and at Aberfoyle in Zimbabwe. Inyanga is the mountain area--people say it is like Scotland and it does remind me of the "Chariots of Fire" scenery. Aberfoyle is one of the many tea estates and beauty wise I feel it is the most gorgeous scenery I have experienced here. However, I couldn't help wondering if the Africans working in the fields were ever able to see the beauty because I am sure the work is long and tiring and back breaking. I always wonder--is this the last time in my life that I will see this particular sight or...will God let us return here and visit???

We love you all. Please pray for us and the ministry here and please drop us a note if you have special things in your life you want us to be praying about!

May 20, 1986

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Hebron Churches,

I'm sitting in the morning sunshine of an early winter day in Harare. I'd imagine the temperature is about the same as it is back in Hebron right now. Our winters are rather mild to say the least!

Yesterday was a disturbing one in Harare as we experienced bombings at the hands of South African agents. Our family woke up at about 1:00 AM to the sound of four tremendous blasts. One, it turned out, was just over a mile away! We didn't know at the time that the great "booms" were actually bombs. Nothing was mentioned in the morning news. We were still in the dark until Joanne's mom called from Hanover, N.H. at noon. ~~We assured her that we~~ She had heard on U.S. radio that Harare had been bombed. We assured her that we were OK and thanked her for letting us know from 9000 miles away what had just happened in our neighborhood the night before. Later in the day we got reports on the shortwave about the attacks but it was morning before the news came out in the Zimbabwe paper. The targets of the bombings were African National Congress offices and residences. No one was killed but we had been worried as some of our church members are associated with the ANC. This organization is opposed to the current white minority government and is spearheading the revolution from outside South Africa's borders. It seems that South Africa is now going to hunt these people down even in countries like Zimbabwe, so, as has been long expected, South Africa's violence is now directly affecting us. The U.S. embassy here has told us that there is no cause for alarm. We do ask though that you be praying for our continued safety and that the injustice of the whole South African system could be dealt with without resorting to a war which would inevitably envelope all of the southern part of Africa.

As you may have heard by now, our plans for returning to the U.S. have changed. It has nothing to do with the violence or securi problems but rather with the Zimbabwe government's new policy on not renewing work permits for foreign workers. My permit ran out last January. The church applied for a renewal and it was turned down. We would have had to leave the country in March if Herbert Chikomo had not stepped in and asked the government to permit us to stay at least until the end of the General Assembly (which will be held at City Church). To date the government still has not said "yes" to his request. But they have not said "no", so here we are! But as a result we have had to make new plans. The Lord willing we will return to the U.S. on October 3rd. We will be staying with my parents in Ardmore. Pa. until I receive a call from a church. As Aaron is beginning his sophomore year in high school we will be sending him back in August. All of us hope to get up to Hebron for Andrea and Schyler's wedding in the second weekend of October. But there is much ground to cover before that day.

One of the problems in preparing for my departure is that there is still an acute shortage of trained ministers in this countr When I leave, of the six large churches in Harare, only three will have ministers. The Urban Evangelism Program of the presbytery will also need supervision. Our teaching and training has produced three ministerial candidates and about ten pastor-evangelists but it will be sometime before any of these people will be able to take responsibility for the larger churches or the evangelism program of the presbytery. Yet the churches are growing. What is needed is trained leadership. What I am seeking to do in these remaining months is: to train one of our experienced ministers in

the operations and supervision of our Urban Evangelism Program; to continue to work one-on-one with our new evangelists; and to guide and encourage the leaders of City Church to take greater responsibility in the development of our multiracial church family.

Last Sunday was an exciting day! We went out to one of our new evangelism spots to receive the first members into the fellowship of the church. The name of the community is Hatcliffe. An elder and two young evangelists have just begun working there. On Sunday two families (five people) professed their faith in Christ and were received into church membership. Again we worshipped under trees in a very pleasant setting. There were about thirty people there. The women and children sat on the ground (which was covered by a plastic sheet). The young men sat off to the side and the fathers sat on the makeshift benches. (This is all a part of the culture.) The baptism water was poured out of a plastic pitcher into a plastic bowl. The new members knelt on the grass. It was Pentecost Sunday -- the day the Church began. In the afternoon we invited a retired couple visiting from the U.S. to accompany us to Chitungwiza. They seemed to be willing for an adventure so we crammed them into the old Mbare church van along with four others and the visiting 5 man choir from the Zambian Presbyterian Church. The Pentcost service was a jiont one for our two Chitungwiza congregations and the old Luthern church building where we met was packed. The singing was lively and all the people showed their appreciation for the music of the Zambian visitors. The building is still under repair. Where I was preaching there is still no roof. The wind was blowing my hair in all directions. (You know my hair.) But then it was Pentecost.

Our family life has been complicated by some illnesses. As there are 12 people living here there is usually at least one who is sick. Thankfully God has continuously brought us through. Aaron and Garth are both well. They are both eager to return to America. This term in school is the "you are forced to play rugby" term. They will be glad to get back to America where the lingering impression is that you are not forced to do anything. We had fun together on a four-day vacation we took in April. We stayed in the mountains of Nyanga, rode horses, played golf, and stayed away from the casino (that was my idea). It rained every day but we did things anyway. Can you imagine Joanne searching for lost golf balls in the rain? I was proud of her! Next month the men (John, Paul, Aaron, Garth, and I) will be off to Mana Pools - the home of the charging elephant of 1984.
/A few weeks ago a tourist had his arm bitten off by a crocodile. Needless to say we we will be careful.

We look forward to seeing all of you again in the not too distant future. Don't give up your prayers for us though. I sense that God's guidance, protection, and encouragement will be especially needed in theses months ahead.

Yours in Christ,

Sturge

February 2026

EPILOGUE

How many years stretch out like rubber bands behind us?
Now you're standing in the doorway like a ghost
There's still time enough to talk of all the memories we piled high
It's so damn good to see you
Ain't it strange the way the time flies?
- Fire Escape, The Head & the Heart

I wrote my introduction exactly a year ago. Time has marched on, but my memories of Harare continue to be a source of nostalgic fascination. The more I try to sharpen their focus with the help of primary sources like these Epistles, the more they reconstitute themselves within the ever-evolving autobiographical fiction of my life. There is no longer a chance for me to talk to my dad about these *memories piled high*, and my mother's memories are shot through with the inaccuracies of her mental decline. In a way, reading these Epistles is a way to see my mom and dad again, to rediscover them on the page and feel the force of their youthful personalities. *Ain't it strange the way time flies*, indeed.

I originally thought this Epilogue would be a coda about how my religious journey has differed from theirs. I've changed my mind. This book is theirs – and theirs alone. I don't want my religious perspective to take away from the authenticity of what they believed. Maybe there is no *right* and *wrong* when it comes to the Big Questions of Life: Why are we here? How did we get here? Is there some different reality available to our human consciousness after death? If an answer works for a person, stick with it. If it doesn't, find another. My parents found their answer, and its seeds are scattered across these 80-odd pages. If you want to read mine, search out "Through the Rear View Mirror" on this same website. Nobody's answers insulate them from the restlessness and unpredictability of life. They can only provide a story in which to contextualize them, and inspiration to keep moving forward. In the best of times, our world views connect us with gratitude and guide us into connections with others where we feel loved and valued. That's as much of a sermon as I'll give here.

I will add a few thoughts about the nature of memory. It's appropriate that Dad's last Epistle letter relates a slice of daily life (the bombings in Harare in late May 1986). Neither my brother or I have any memory of that event. It was completely wiped from the slate of our minds, probably a long time ago. What sticks and what slips away? What memories change as we age and nudge us to think differently *in retrospect* to how we experienced something *in the present*? Letters like these Epistles capture the experience of life in the present tense much more accurately than memory can ever hope to. That is why I rely on them so heavily when examining my family's past.

These letters have now aged 40+ years, but they stand as a testament to a time and a place that broadened how many parents saw the world – especially my dad. Mom has always been primarily focused on relationships with people – in helping those in need – and that animated her wherever she lived. For Dad, I think the specific experience of living in fledgling African country, of looking back at the United States from afar, of being thrust into a backwater of the "Global Church" – these all combined to shift the trajectory of his professional life and personal theology. It started the ball rolling to where he ended up – founding a non-profit organization that served the needs of immigrants and refugees in the United States. He wanted to extend the hand of Christian welcome to people trying to navigate the confusing linguistic and professional challenges of a new country. After all, by that time my parents were already experts on the alchemy that turns strangers into friends. And once you are friends, you might just get an Epistle in your mailbox once a month filing you in on how Sturge and Joanne are doing. I hope you enjoyed reading this as much as I did archiving them. Amen.